

Foreign Secretary statement: decision to charge Hong Kong politicians and activists for conspiracy to commit subversion

Press release

A statement from the Foreign Secretary after 47 Hong Kong politicians and activists were charged for conspiracy to commit subversion under the National Security Law.



Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

The decision to charge 47 Hong Kong politicians and activists for conspiracy to commit subversion under the National Security Law is another deeply disturbing step. It demonstrates in the starkest way the use of the law to stifle any political dissent, rather than restore security which was the claimed intention of the legislation. The National Security Law violates the Joint Declaration, and its use in this way contradicts the promises made by the Chinese government, and can only further undermine confidence that it will keep its word on such sensitive issues.

Published 1 March 2021

New laws to protect victims added to Domestic Abuse Bill

- New offence of non-fatal strangulation to be introduced as part of ground-breaking legislation
- Controlling or coercive behaviour offence extended to include abuse where perpetrators and victims no longer live together
- 'Revenge porn' offence widened to cover threats to share intimate images

A raft of new amendments to the Domestic Abuse Bill will be presented this week, providing greater protections for victims and further clamping down on perpetrators.

The proposals include making non-fatal strangulation a specific criminal offence, punishable by up to five years in prison. The act typically involves an abuser strangling or intentionally affecting their victim's breathing in an attempt to control or intimidate them. Today's announcement follows concerns that perpetrators were avoiding punishment as the practice can often leave no visible injury, making it harder to prosecute under existing offences such as Actual Bodily Harm (ABH).

The Government will also strengthen legislation around controlling or coercive behaviour (CCB) – no longer making it a requirement for abusers and victims to live together. The change follows a government review which highlighted that those who leave abusive ex-partners can often be subjected to sustained or increased controlling or coercive behaviour post-separation.

Meanwhile, so-called 'revenge porn' laws – introduced by the government in 2015 – will be widened to include threats to disclose intimate images with the intention to cause distress. More than 900 abusers have been convicted since revenge porn was outlawed but Ministers are determined to further protect victims, with those who threaten to share such images facing up to two years behind bars.

The measures confirmed today have been developed closely with peers, advocates and victims who campaigned on these important issues. They form a series of amendments being tabled to the landmark Domestic Abuse Bill which enters Report Stage next week, with Royal Assent expected in the Spring.

Lord Chancellor Robert Buckland QC MP said:

This Bill provides a once-in-a-generation opportunity to strengthen our response to domestic abuse and its many forms.

From outlawing non-fatal strangulation to giving better protections in court – we are delivering the support victims need to feel safer while ensuring perpetrators face justice for the torment they have inflicted.

Safeguarding Minister Victoria Atkins said:

The Domestic Abuse Bill is a game-changing piece of legislation that will help millions of people who are subjected to many different forms of abuse.

Controlling or coercive behaviour is an insidious form of domestic abuse that can destroy lives.

Since we introduced the offence within the Serious Crime Act 2015, controlling and coercive behaviour recorded offences and prosecutions have increased year on year, but we have listened to concerns and understand that perpetrators of CCB can continue to abuse their victims when they no longer live together.

I am pleased that the offence is being extended so we can protect more victims and send a clear message to perpetrators.

The Government is also tabling a number of other amendments to the Domestic Abuse Bill which will:

- provide special measures in civil courts similar to those available in family courts. This could include the use of protective screens in court or the ability to give evidence via video links to support vulnerable courts users.
- make it easier for victims who may prefer not to report abuse to avoid being cross-examined in person, by widening the list of evidence to prove abuse has occurred to include things such as a letter from a doctor or an employer.
- clarify the use of 'barring orders' in the family courts to prevent abusive ex-partners from repeatedly dragging their victims back to court – which can be used as a form of continuing domestic abuse.
- require public authorities conducting domestic homicide reviews to send a copy of their completed reports to the Domestic Abuse Commissioner – strengthening the opportunity to learn lessons and prevent future deaths.

Hetti Barkworth-Nanton, chair of Refuge said:

This is a significant moment for women experiencing domestic abuse who have been threatened with the sharing of their private intimate images and we are thrilled that the government has recognised the need for urgent change. Our research found that 1 in 7 young women have experienced these threats to share, with the overwhelming majority experiencing them from a current or former partner, alongside other forms of abuse.

The Domestic Abuse Bill provides the perfect legislative vehicle for this change, and the government has acted quickly and decisively. This is a victory for women and girls and testimony to

the power of working together for change.

Dr Nicola Sharp-Jeffs OBE, Founder & CEO, Surviving Economic Abuse said:

We're absolutely delighted the government is criminalising post-separation abuse via an amendment to the Domestic Abuse Bill.

By doing so, victims will receive the recognition they need and deserve. Post-separation abuse is a devastating form of coercive control and the economic abuse elements of this can continue for decades.

Legislation is the first essential step on the path to eradicating it and preventing future homicides.

The Home Office has also today announced the successful organisations that will receive part of the £500k announced to fund research into domestic abuse perpetrators. The aim of the fund is to develop our understanding of domestic abuse perpetrators and to strengthen the evidence base for what works in addressing their behaviour. The 11 successful organisations can be found [here](#).

At the same time, the Government is investing hundreds of millions to deliver swifter justice and support victims. This includes a recent [£40 million to fund vital helplines and recruit more specialist counsellors](#).

- The Domestic Abuse Bill will begin its Report Stage on Monday 8 March.
- All amendments will be tabled prior to this.
- The Domestic Abuse Bill is a ground-breaking piece of legislation transforming the response to this crime. A factsheet on the provisions in the Bill can be found [here](#).
- Further guidance on key amendments can be found below.
- A number of the amendments have been tabled by Peers in the House of Lords: Baroness Newlove on non-fatal strangulation, Baroness Morgan on threatening to share intimate images and Baroness Lister on controlling and coercive behaviour.

Controlling or coercive behaviour

- The Controlling and Coercive behaviour amendment will widen the scope of the definition of "personally connected" in the CCB offence so that the offence may apply to former partners and family members who do not live together.
- It follows a Home Office review into Coercive and Controlling behaviour which has been published today (Monday 1 March). Having considered the findings of the review and the concerns raised in it by stakeholders and domestic abuse organisations, the government agrees that the CCB offence should be amended so that it also applies to controlling or coercive behaviour by a former intimate partner that takes place post-separation or by a family member who does not reside with the victim.

Threats to share intimate images

- An amendment will extend the existing offence of disclosing private sexual photographs and films, without the consent of the individual in the photographs/film, with intent to cause that person distress (at s33 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015) to include “threats” to disclose such material.
- This behaviour will remain subject to the existing 2-year maximum prison sentence.

Non-fatal strangulation

- This amendment will make it an offence to Intentionally strangle another person or do any other act that affects a person’s ability to breathe.
- The offence covers a range of behaviours specifically including strangulation, but also suffocation and other methods which affect another person’s ability to breathe.
- A person convicted of this offence can face up to 5 years’ in prison.
- The offence can also be committed abroad by a UK national (or a person habitually resident in England and Wales).
- As with any new offence, we will look at what training and guidance should accompany it and will closely monitor its use.

All households with children of school aged to get rapid COVID-19 tests per person per week

- Regular, rapid testing will be offered to households, childcare and support bubbles of primary, secondary and college age children and young people
- In line with the government’s roadmap, the latest expansion of asymptomatic testing will support the national priority to get children back to school
- Rapid test kits will be available to collect from more than 500 locations, or through workplace testing and local community testing services

Testing will continue to be a vital part of our response to Covid19, supporting the roadmap set out by the Prime Minister earlier this week. As we cautiously ease restrictions in England, starting with the return of schools and moving towards more social mixing at the end of March, we need to be sure that each Covid case is found as quickly and as easily as possible. Although cases are declining, everyone needs to play their part to keep the virus under control while keeping children and young people in school.

As laid out in the roadmap, secondary school and college students will now be tested twice a week, receiving three initial tests at school or college before transitioning to twice weekly home testing. Primary school children will not be regularly asymptotically tested due to low levels of transmission between younger aged children but will continue to need to come forward for tests if they have symptoms.

In addition to this, the government has confirmed twice-weekly testing using rapid lateral flow tests will be given for free to all families and households with primary, secondary school and college aged children and young people, including childcare and support bubbles, to help find more Covid-19 cases and break chains of transmission. Twice-weekly testing will also be offered to adults working in the wider school community, including bus drivers and after school club leaders.

With about a third of individuals with coronavirus showing no symptoms and potentially spreading it without knowing, targeted, regular testing will mean more positive cases within households are found and prevented from entering schools and colleges, helping to keep educational settings safe.

Rapid testing detects cases quickly – in under 30 minutes – meaning positive cases can isolate immediately. This can be the difference between children being able to stay in school, or a class being sent home due to an outbreak. It could also be the difference between a workplace having to close for a period, or being able to stay open and running.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

Regular testing of households and childcare support bubbles of primary and secondary school children is another tool we are making available to help keep schools safe. We know that one in three people with Covid-19 don't have any symptoms, so targeted, regular testing will mean more positive cases are kept out of schools and colleges.

As we continue to roll out the vaccine, testing offers us a way forward. Sustained and repeated testing for people without symptoms has a critical role to play as sections of society are reopened by driving down transmission rates.

By everyone playing their part and getting tested regularly, vital public services, workplaces and educational settings can stay open and running, and we can move closer to a more normal way of life.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

We are getting all children back in the classroom from 8 March, because it will bring huge benefits to their education and wellbeing, and is a hugely important step in helping them recover from the impact of the pandemic.

Testing family members will provide yet another layer of reassurance to parents and education staff that schools are as safe as possible, building on the massive increase in testing for secondary school and college students, and strengthened requirements around face coverings in areas where social distancing cannot be maintained.

Professor Yvonne Doyle, Medical Director at Public Health England, said:

These rapid tests help uncover hidden cases of the virus and break chains of transmission, stopping outbreaks before they occur.

Combined with other protective measures, they are a vital tool to help us lower infection rates and ensure that they stay low.

I would encourage all eligible households to take up the offer of twice weekly rapid testing – it's quick and painless and could help save lives.

All households with primary and secondary school and college age children, and childcare and support bubbles, will be encouraged to start regular twice-weekly testing as schools return. Tests will be available for adults in these households to collect on 1 March. As with student testing, this is encouraged but not mandatory. A secondary PCR test will be required for positive lateral flow tests which are taken at home, either through at home PCR testing or at a local PCR testing site.

Getting a rapid test is quick, convenient and free. The expanded regular testing offer for people without symptoms will be delivered through:

- testing in-person via workplace testing
- at local authority test sites
- through a new ordering service, which once launched on 1 March will allow people to order lateral flow tests online for collection at a local PCR test site during specific test collection time windows

The expansion of asymptomatic testing is already well underway for those who need to leave home for work. Workplace testing has already scaled up, with both private and public sector employers signed up to provide rapid testing at asymptomatic testing sites, along with a self-test option for those that cannot access a workplace testing site. This includes the UK's largest employer – the NHS, adult social care, education staff and a wide range of other sectors.

All local authorities in England have now enrolled in the community testing

programme. As a partnership between national and local government, community testing offers asymptomatic testing for local public services, small businesses, self-employed people and communities that have been disproportionately affected by the virus.

Testing in education settings is now well established, with 600,000 tests done at universities since last year and more than three million rapid COVID-19 tests conducted in schools and colleges in England since 4 January, including tests for those students who have already returned and regular testing for all staff.

Rapid, regular testing for new groups is one of a range of new measures designed to minimise the spread of COVID-19 and support the successful return of more learners to face-to-face education and childcare settings. Testing is an additional tool, working in conjunction with other protective measures that are in place in schools to help protect staff and students including social distancing, handwashing and face covering. Schools and colleges will not be expected to provide the test kits to families or administer the family testing process.

Anyone with symptoms of Covid-19 should book a test [online](#) or by calling 119.

[New UK Government COVID testing site opens in Granton, Edinburgh](#)

The UK Government has today, Saturday 27 February, opened a new walk-through coronavirus testing centre at [Ainslie Park Leisure Centre Car Park in Granton, Edinburgh EH5 2HF](#).

The test centre is part of the largest network of diagnostic testing facilities created in British history. In Scotland, this comprises 7 drive through sites, 33 walk-through sites, 42 mobile units, plus the Glasgow Lighthouse Lab which is working round the clock to process samples.

In Scotland, the UK Government is providing all COVID testing and test processing outside of the NHS. Around two thirds of all daily tests are provided by the UK Government, in support of Scotland's health services.

Tests must be booked in advance at: www.nhsinform.scot/test-and-protect or by calling 0800 028 2816. People should only book at test if they have coronavirus symptoms (a high temperature, a new and continuous cough, or a loss or change to their sense of smell or taste).

Health Minister Lord Bethell said:

To respond to the coronavirus, we have built a major testing and tracing system from scratch. We are constantly working to expand and improve it with new technologies and innovations so everyone with symptoms can get a test.

New walk-in sites like this one makes it even easier to get a test no matter where you live. If you have symptoms of coronavirus, I urge you to book a test today and follow the advice of NHS Test and Protect if you are contacted to protect others and stop the spread of the virus.

Baroness Dido Harding, Interim Executive Chair of the National Institute for Health Protection, said:

Walk-through sites offer communities better access to coronavirus testing, so everyone with symptoms can get a test. This new site is part of our ongoing work to expand our testing network across the UK which now has the capacity to process more than 700,000 tests a day. We will continue to expand capacity to improve test turnaround times and push forward testing innovations to make sure anyone who needs a test can get one.

Please book a test if you have coronavirus symptoms: a new continuous cough, a high temperature and a loss or change in sense of smell or taste, and follow the advice of NHS Test and Protect if you are contacted.

UK Government Minister for Scotland, Iain Stewart said:

The UK Government is doing everything it can to support people in all parts of the UK through the pandemic.

Testing continues to play an important role how we manage the virus alongside the roll out of vaccines, helping to identify local outbreaks, slow down the rate of transmission and protect communities. I would like to thank the public for continuing to do the right thing and come forward to be tested when they display symptoms.

The UK Government continues to provide the bulk of testing in Scotland, with this new walk-through centre in Edinburgh just the latest in our extensive network. We have also secured and paid for millions of doses of the Pfizer and Oxford vaccines for all parts of the UK.

Hope is on the horizon, but we can't let up on our efforts to contain the virus.

Adam McVey, City of Edinburgh Council Leader said:

Our number one priority is keeping Edinburgh's residents safe and the best way to do that is to keep encouraging everyone to follow the latest guidance and to arrange to get themselves tested if they develop any Covid-19 symptoms.

Our other testing sites across Edinburgh have been helping hundreds of people every week to get tested so it's really welcome that this new site is opening in the north of the city. We'll keep the use of the Ainslie Park Leisure Centre under review to ensure that when it's possible for Edinburgh Leisure to reopen for sport and leisure use, venues can operate efficiently.

Simon Venn, Mitie Chief Government & Strategy Officer, said:

Our priority during the pandemic is to support the nation's efforts to fight COVID-19 and help keep the country running. Testing is a critical part of the UK's strategy to combat coronavirus and we're proud to support the UK Government with this vital task. A big thank you to all the NHS staff, Mitie employees and other frontline heroes in Edinburgh, who are working tirelessly to keep us all safe.

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Notes to Editors

1. For further information contact the press office of the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland on 0131 244 9028.
2. The UK Government is providing the following test facilities in Scotland:

Seven drive through testing sites:

- Prestwick Airport
- Glasgow Airport
- Edinburgh Airport
- Aberdeen Airport
- Inverness (University of the Highlands and Islands, Inverness campus)
- Dundee (Dudhope Castle car park)
- Cumbernauld (Broadwood Stadium)

33 walk through centres in town and cities across Scotland:

- St Andrews (Victory Memorial Hall)
- Glasgow City Centre (ARC sports centre, Glasgow Caledonian University)
- Aberdeen (Roy Strathdee building, Aberdeen University)
- Edinburgh City Centre (Usher Hall)
- Glasgow City Centre (Riverside Car Park)
- West Dunbartonshire (Napier Hall)
- Stirling (Forthside Way Development Site)
- Dundee (Park Place Car Park)
- Edinburgh Sighthill (Gate 55, 55 Sighthill Road)
- Inverclyde (Crawfurdsburn Community Centre)
- Inverness (Highland Council Headquarters Car Park)
- Edinburgh Leith (Leith Library)
- Perth (Thimble Row Car Park)
- Glasgow Gorbals (St Francis Community Centre)
- Cumbernauld (Fleming House Car Park)
- Arbroath (Bruce House Car Park)
- Elgin (Lossie Green Car Park)
- East Kilbride (Red Deer Centre)
- Hamilton (Eddlewood Public Hall)
- Kilmarnock (Grand Hall)
- Oban (Mossfield Car Park)
- Wick (Riverside Car Park)
- Galashiels (Langlee Community Centre)
- Dumfries (Brooms Road Car Park)
- Paisley (Bridge Street Car Park)
- Glenrothes (Glenrothes Miners Charitable Society)
- Dunfermline (Dell Farquharson House)
- Glasgow Pollock (Pollock Community Centre)
- Glasgow Castlemilk (Barlia Football Centre)
- Kirkcaldy (Overton Community Centre)
- Glasgow Easterhouse (Easterhouse Social Work Office Car Park)
- Edinburgh Niddrie (Jack Kane Leisure Centre Car Park)
- Edinburgh Granton (Ainslie Park Leisure Centre)

The UK Government is also funding the operation of 42 mobile testing units throughout Scotland, as well as the Glasgow Lighthouse Lab (operated on our behalf by Glasgow University). This is part of a network of Lighthouse Labs across the UK mass processing covid tests.

Further information for those seeking a test:

Tests must be booked in advance at: www.nhsinform.scot/test-and-protect or by calling 0800 028 2816.

People should only book a test if they have coronavirus symptoms (a high temperature, a new and continuous cough, or a loss or change to their sense of smell or taste) or have been told to seek a test by a clinician or an NHS tracer.

People traveling to and from the test centre must NOT use taxis or public

transport.

People should wear a face covering while travelling to and from the test centre, and while in the centre.

Tests in this centre are self-administered. This involves taking a swab of the nose and the back of the throat. The process is simple, only takes a few minutes, and full instructions are provided. Staff are on hand to provide additional support for vulnerable people and those with disabilities.

The centre will operate seven days a week, with appointments available from 8am to 8pm.

Anyone testing positive will be contacted by NHS Scotland tracers. They will help them identify those they have been in contact with, protecting others from further transmission. Close contacts of those testing positive will also hear from contact tracers, asking them to stay at home for 14 days to prevent them from unknowingly spreading the virus. They will be advised to also book at test if they develop symptoms.

£4.5m to help thousands in central Scotland get gigabit speed broadband

- More than 5,300 homes and businesses across central Scotland to get much faster gigabit broadband.
- Includes premises in Ayrshire, Edinburgh, Falkirk, Fife, Stirlingshire, Greater Glasgow and Lothian.

More than 5,300 homes and businesses in Ayrshire, Edinburgh, Falkirk, Fife, Stirlingshire, Greater Glasgow and Lothian will get access to gigabit speeds thanks to the first £4.5 million to be awarded from the UK government's nationwide gigabit programme.

These premises currently have slow speeds and were already due to benefit from superfast broadband through the Scottish Government's Reaching 100 (R100) programme, which is scheduled to invest £83 million in central Scotland.

But now, thanks to an agreement between the UK and Scottish governments the properties will get gigabit-capable full fibre broadband built directly to their doorsteps.

While superfast provides minimum speeds of 30 megabits per second, gigabit broadband delivers lightning-fast speeds capable of reaching 1,000 megabits per second.

The move will future-proof people's internet connections in these areas for

the next thirty to forty years and allow them to take full advantage of cutting-edge technologies such as 8K TV and virtual reality streaming.

Matt Warman, UK Minister for Digital Infrastructure said:

The first pound to be spent from our £5 billion pot for gigabit broadband will be in Scotland.

That's because it is our mission to deliver lightning-fast next-generation internet connections to all parts of the UK as we build back better from the pandemic.

And this is just the start. Other areas of Scotland and the rest of the UK will benefit from our record investment in this national broadband upgrade and we'll announce more regions shortly.

Scotland's Connectivity Minister Paul Wheelhouse said:

The past year has demonstrated beyond doubt just how vital digital connectivity is across all areas of our lives – from health, wellbeing and education to social and economic recovery.

That's why the Scottish Government is investing £579 million in funding towards the £600 million cost of our Reaching 100% programme, building the infrastructure which, together with commercially-driven work, will ensure access to superfast broadband speeds to 100% of homes and businesses across Scotland.

The vast majority of connections being delivered to more than 120,000 premises through our investment in the three R100 area contracts – 100% in South, 86% in North and, now, 95% in Central – will be through fibre directly to the premises, delivering gigabit capability, providing connection speeds 30 times faster than our superfast commitment, and resilient, future-proofed connectivity for decades to come.

UK Government Minister for Scotland, Iain Stewart said:

It's great news that Central Scotland has been announced as the first area to benefit from the UK Gigabit Programme, and pleasing to see the UK and Scottish governments working together in partnership to level up communities.

The UK Government will spend more than £5 billion to help those in areas that need improved connectivity most. This will help us to build back better from coronavirus and create new jobs and economic opportunities.

Further information

The Scottish Government's R100 programme is in the process of ensuring that all homes and businesses across Scotland can access superfast broadband. The vast majority of connections will be gigabit-capable and delivered via full fibre cables built directly to premises – known as Fibre to the Premise (FTTP).

In Central Scotland there are some premises which were set to be delivered via Fibre to the Cabinet (FTTC) technology.

The UK Government has committed to delivering nationwide coverage of gigabit capable broadband through its £5 billion UK Gigabit Programme, with a minimum target of 85% coverage by 2025. The £5 billion will be used to subsidise building in hard-to-reach areas that aren't set to benefit from planned industry rollout.

On the basis that the UK Gigabit Programme would have to revisit these 5,368 premises at some point in the future to convert them to FTTP, the Scottish and UK Governments have agreed a technology 'flip' from FTTC to FTTP. This offers the chance to reduce build costs, enabling delivery of the connections earlier and at greater value for money.

The UK government will shortly be announcing further areas of the UK that will be the first to receive a share of the £5 billion and be connected through the UK Gigabit Programme.

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Notes to editors

- The press office for the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport can be contacted on 020 7211 2210.