

# Ministerial Code investigation

## News story

This page contains Sir Alex Allan's findings on the Home Secretary's conduct and an accompanying government statement.



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The Prime Minister has taken advice from his Independent Adviser, Sir Alex Allan, in relation to the allegations made earlier this year around the Home Secretary's conduct. The Prime Minister takes this issue very seriously and recognises that it is always difficult for individuals to come forward and raise concerns and is grateful to those who have done so. The Prime Minister is grateful to Sir Alex for his advice and has considered his conclusions carefully.

It was clear from Sir Alex's advice that at times there have been difficult working relationships all round. Sir Alex's advice found that the Home Secretary had become – justifiably in many instances – frustrated by the Home Office leadership's lack of responsiveness and the lack of support she felt in DfID three years ago. He also found, however, that the Home Secretary had not always treated her civil servants with the consideration and respect that would be expected, and her approach on occasion has amounted to behaviour that can be described as bullying in terms of the impact felt by individuals.

He went on to advise, therefore, that the Home Secretary had not consistently met the high standards expected of her under the Ministerial Code.

The Prime Minister notes Sir Alex's advice that many of the concerns now raised were not raised at the time and that the Home Secretary was unaware of the impact that she had. He is reassured that the Home Secretary is sorry for inadvertently upsetting those with whom she was working. He is also reassured that relationships, practices and culture in the Home Office are much improved. As the arbiter of the code, having considered Sir Alex's advice and weighing up all the factors, the Prime Minister's judgement is that the Ministerial Code was not breached.

The Prime Minister has full confidence in the Home Secretary and considers this matter now closed. He is grateful to the thousands of civil servants working extremely hard to support delivery of the Government's priorities.

## **Findings of the independent adviser**

PDF, 58.2KB, 2 pages

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Published 20 November 2020

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## **Sellafield's COVID-19 test centre to expand**

News story

More people will soon be able to use Sellafield's COVID-19 test and trace service.



The COVID-19 Test Centre at Yottenfews.

The facility, located in the car park of the former Sellafield Visitors' Centre, in West Cumbria, opened earlier this year.

It currently provides COVID-19 tests for people working on the Sellafield

mission.

From Monday 23 November 2020, the service is being expanded so that households of Sellafield Ltd employees can also use it.

People can access the centre if they have COVID-19 symptoms or have come into close contact with someone who has tested positive.

Symptoms include:

- a high temperature
- a new, continuous cough
- a loss or change to sense of smell or taste

Martin Chown, Sellafield Ltd chief executive, said:

We took the decision to establish our own test and trace facility back in March 2020.

Thanks to the support of our owner, the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA), and our public health partners we were able to get the centre up and running quickly.

It has allowed us to track the spread of the virus on the Sellafield site in real time, helping us to maintain safety and security throughout the pandemic.

We're pleased to be able to extend the service to households of Sellafield Ltd employees.

Tests will be offered subject to availability.

Priority will be given to people working on the Sellafield mission who are mainly based on the site.

People should not contact the test centre themselves. Tests can only be booked by Sellafield Ltd employees via their line manager.

Published 20 November 2020

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## **October 2020 Transaction Data**

News story

This data provides information about the number and types of applications that HM Land Registry completed in October 2020.



Image credit: NicoElNino/Shutterstock.com

Please note this data shows what HM Land Registry has been able to process during the time period covered and is not necessarily a reflection of market activity.

In October:

- HM Land Registry completed more than 1,761,230 applications to change or query the Land Register
- the South East topped the table of regional applications with 422,216

HM Land Registry completed 1,761,236 applications in October compared with 1,704,591 in September and 1,905,543 last October 2019, of which:

- 267,115 were applications for register updates compared with 271,392 in September
- 981,945 were applications for an official copy of a register compared with 950,164 in September
- 212,982 were search and hold queries (official searches) compared with 197,197 in September
- 15,506 were postal applications from non-account holders compared with 16,358 in September

## Applications by region and country

Region/country	August applications	September applications	October applications
<b>South East</b>	355,163	405,032	422,216
<b>Greater London</b>	275,735	310,818	325,631
<b>North West</b>	170,636	192,764	196,957
<b>South West</b>	149,120	167,493	174,310
<b>West Midlands</b>	124,753	143,282	148,009
<b>Yorkshire and the Humber</b>	116,805	134,097	134,139

Region/country	August applications	September applications	October applications
<b>East Midlands</b>	112,849	122,933	124,686
<b>North</b>	69,766	80,185	82,547
<b>East Anglia</b>	64,781	72,439	75,586
<b>Isles of Scilly</b>	39	44	69
<b>Wales</b>	65,061	75,401	77,009
<b>England and Wales (not assigned)</b>	83	103	77
<b>Total</b>	1,504,791	1,704,591	1,761,236

## Top 5 local authority areas

### October applications

#### Top 5 local authority areas October applications

Birmingham	25,670
City of Westminster	22,889
Leeds	20,087
Cornwall	18,551
Wandsworth	16,548

### September applications

#### Top 5 local authority areas September applications

Birmingham	24,035
City of Westminster	21,642
Leeds	20,150
Cornwall	18,740
Manchester	16,559

## Top 5 customers

### October applications

#### Top 5 customers October applications

Infotrack Limited	98,689
Enact	41,045
TM Group (UK) Ltd (Search Choice)	30,445
O'Neill Patient	25,566
Optima Legal Services	21,799

### September applications

#### Top 5 customers September applications

Infotrack Limited	92,488
Enact	43,392

Top 5 customers	September applications
O'Neill Patient	29,081
TM Group (UK) Ltd (Search Choice)	21,501
Optima Legal Services	21,436

## Next publication

Transaction Data is published on the 15th working day of each month. The November data will be published at 11am on Monday 21 December 2020.

Published 20 November 2020

Last updated 20 November 2020 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 20 November 2020

First published.

## How employers are making the most of apprenticeship incentives

Apprenticeships are jobs which combine practical on-the-job skills training with sustained off-the-job learning, available from entry level to master's degree-equivalent. Your employee will get training in the knowledge, skills and behaviours that are relevant to their job and you will need to pay them a salary.

We've compiled several case studies from businesses making the most of the government incentives, including:

### Lookers PLC

Manchester based Lookers PLC, who offer new and used cars from leading manufacturers, are accessing the incentive payments for apprentices to support their apprentice intake this year.

The business has 6,700 employees, and apprentices make up 7% of the workforce. Lookers have 185 apprentice vacancies to fill across the Group, with 135 vacancies in England, and in scope for the incentive payment for apprentices.

Lookers see the incentive payment for apprentices as a driver to financially secure their apprenticeship program moving forward, and are modelling to bring in considerable funds as a result of the intake before 31st January 2021. These funds will secure future apprenticeships for years to come, under

the 95% Government contributed co-investment model.

### **Matt Clay, Group Qualifications Manager at Lookers said:**

We're continuing our investment into apprenticeships, attracting bright young talent into the business. The current climate has the potential to leave a damaging impact on the future of young people, and we're delighted to offer 185 Apprenticeship roles across the Group during this time, enabling opportunities for these young people to build their confidence, skills and experience.

Our continued investment into apprenticeships is a result of the recognised value they generate for the business; for every £1 invested we realise a return of £20. The current Government support package will build upon the commercial impact of our apprentices, enabling us to secure the financial future of the Program, having moved into the Government co-investment model.

### **Walsall Council**

Walsall Council have a workforce of over 7400, with apprentices representing 5.26% per cent of their head count. The Council has recently accessed the incentive payments for apprenticeships, with payment totalling £31,000 so far.

The incentive payments accessed by Walsall Council will support with the recruitment of 19 Teaching Assistants and the associated wage costs in schools, where budgets are tight, and in the recruitment of 2 Level 7 Degree apprentices, to work in finance and business support. The council have plans to recruit apprentices in Motor Vehicle, Customer Service, alongside a Learning Mentor Apprentice, over the next few months.

The Council were involved in the development of the Incentive payments for hiring a new apprentice and consultations with employers, before they became live on 1 September.

### **Helena Baxter, apprenticeship lead, Walsall Council said:**

Apprenticeships are good for business, as apprentices can be moulded and shaped in their area of expertise, to deliver the exact skills your business needs.

Apprentices are the future decision makers, managers and leaders of Walsall Council and continuing to bring apprentices into the business, even in such difficult times, is important to protect our future, whilst ensuring we continue to deliver the vital services our communities depend upon.

I would urge all employers to continue to recruit, and to benefit

from government incentives to ease financial burden, whilst offering exciting and rewarding careers opportunities to apprentices.

## **Softcat**

IT infrastructure and services provider Softcat employ over 1500 staff, with 51 apprentices; representing just over 3 per cent percent of the organisational headcount.

Through their training provider network, Softcat were made aware of the government incentives for employers and applied for the incentive payment for hiring new apprentices.

This additional funding, totalling £90,000, will help support the recruitment of 45 new apprentices, along with many other things. Other than the financial benefit this payment will provide, Softcat will direct this funding to additional training and better experiences for their apprentices – especially in the current climate when they are working from home.

**Lois Simon, Learning and Development Lead said:**

Accessing the incentive payment for hiring new apprentices means that Softcat can better support the cohort of new apprentices joining the team. This significant funding will see apprentices benefit from more support as they start their apprenticeship, whilst helping to fund the apprentice journey – including incentives for apprentices themselves, extra-curricular activities and graduation ceremonies, when apprentices complete their learning.

The benefits of apprenticeships to business are significant and I would urge employers to continue to recruit during this time, and to access the support that's been made available to support all employers through the process.

## **Vianet**

Digital technologies company Vianet, based in the North East, worked closely with the Tees Valley Combined Authority – and immediately knew the advantages of accessing the incentive payment for apprentices. With a head count of 153 and 4 current apprentices, Vianet has applied for approximately £25,000 in incentives, to support their increasing workforce through apprenticeships.

Their 'grow within' ethos means Vianet provides apprenticeship opportunities to existing staff. Apprenticeships work for Vianet, as they allow employees to expand their knowledge, whilst having a structured learning programme that

embeds back into the projects they are working on; making a real impact on the organisation.

The incentive payment for new apprentices, with apprenticeship levy and some additional external funding, will allow Vianet to employ and recruit during this difficult time, something they would not have normally been able to do.

Vianet also currently have three interns and are considering if the business could also support a trainee.

**Maret Ward, Learning and Development adviser said:**

Apprenticeships are great as they allow individuals of all ages to have a strong post -16 alternative to the academic route.

Organisations benefit from reduced recruitment and training costs, or salary costs in some cases with apprenticeships; whilst the apprentice brings improved productivity into the workplace.

It is important that an organisation has a robust commitment to the programme when they recruit. Apprentices become high calibre employees who can demonstrate industry skills, backed with the academic learning that apprenticeships offer.

I am delighted that our own apprentice had an alternative route to a great career and is progressing to degree level. In return, we benefit from the high levels skills and intelligence he brings to our business.

## **Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust**

Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust first became aware of incentive payments for apprenticeships via Health Education England and their Education and Skills Funding Agency Account Manager.

The Trust has a workforce of 2300, including social workers, occupational therapists, nursing associates and administration apprentices, in addition to mental health nursing apprentices due to commence in January 2021.

The Trust welcomes the introduction of the incentive payments for apprentices, given the national shortage of nurses, and the target to employ 50,000 more nurses nationally by 2025.

Recognising that there are a number of vacancies in all disciplines of nursing in rural Lincolnshire, with many rural towns finding it difficult to appoint, the Trust is delighted to employ 10 nursing apprentices from the local area, using the incentive payments. By employing apprentices and training their own staff into clinical positions, the Trust supports their local community by offering meaningful careers, whilst retaining trainees beyond training, due to their ties to the local area.

The incentive payment for apprenticeships is being used by the trust to support nursing apprentice salaries, and the other costs incurred the recruitment of apprentices.

The Trust has also received financial support from Health Education England for nursing apprenticeships which makes cohort recruitment and training possible. The Trust will also access the £1500 or £2000 grant for age related apprenticeship starts.

## **Smith & Williamson**

Smith & Williamson is among the ten largest firms of accountants in the UK. With a workforce of 1800, Smith and Williamson has 124 apprentices, in roles including Assurance & Business Services, Business Tax and Private Client Tax. The firm merged with Tilney Group in September 2020 and is now part of the Tilney Smith and Williamson Group.

Smith and Williamson has applied for the incentive payments for hiring new apprentices after hearing about them through financial media. Having recruited their largest-ever intake of apprentices during 2020, including those joining straight from school, the incentive payment will be used to support individuals as they work from home during the pandemic, and to ensure they continue to receive quality time and mentoring from their line managers. The payment will also support Smith and Williamson's aim to recruit more apprentices into the business.

### **Claire Davis, Head of Learning and Development for Professional Services at Smith & Williamson, said:**

The firm has seen many benefits of the apprenticeship programme already, including access to a more diverse talent pool and, development of professional skills and behaviours that are key to personal and business success in today's world, as well as technical knowledge, increased loyalty among apprentices and positive feedback from clients.

Smith and Williamson is committed to offering apprenticeship opportunities and we are seeking to continue to develop and extend our programmes in 2021.

## **MTR Elizabeth Line**

MTR Elizabeth Line, based in London and operator of sustainable rail transport services, heard about the hire a new apprentice incentive through media coverage, before checking [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) to understand the incentives in more detail.

In August the company registered, through their Apprenticeship Service account, for the 'Hiring a new apprentice' incentive for two new apprentices

to join their team of over 500 past and current apprentices. MTR Elizabeth Line are proud to have increased their apprentice salary to align with London Living Wage rates of pay – and the incentive payment will help support these costs and the costs of uniforms.

The incentive payment will also benefit the business by allowing MTR Elizabeth Line to continue to develop the skills of people from the communities they serve, many of whom are from disadvantaged backgrounds or underrepresented groups. Some apprentices may require additional support during their apprenticeship and the incentive payment will enable MTR Elizabeth Line to employ apprentices that may require additional support during their training.

The company are also in the process of applying for the Kickstart incentive, to offer thirty 6-month paid work placements. This will allow MTR Elizabeth Line to support young people by helping to develop their skills so they are ready to find sustained employment on completion of their placement; working to offer permanent employment within the business for those individuals that demonstrate their commitment and motivation during their placement.

**Paul Siniecki, Strategic Labour Needs and Training Manager at MTR Elizabeth Line said:**

We plan to continue to offer apprenticeship opportunities in 2021 and will be recruiting for the role of Customer Experience Assistant to work at the new stations in the Crossrail tunnel, and we will also be using the new 'Redundancy Support Service for Apprentices', who have been made redundant, for future apprenticeship opportunities, supporting those that have lost their job and giving them a new start.

MTR Elizabeth Line also work closely with the Steps into Work programme, a three-way partnership between TfL, Mencap and Barnet & Southgate College that provides 12-month of work experience for adults with mild to moderate learning disabilities and/or on the autism spectrum. Two of their current apprentices have been recruited following completion of the Steps into Work programme. MTR Elizabeth Line are also looking at T level learner recruitment in the future, following the delayed opening of the Elizabeth line.

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**How employers are benefitting from the**

# **Kickstart Scheme**

Kickstart offers six-month work placements, in new jobs, for 16 to 24 year olds who are currently out of work claiming Universal Credit and are at risk of long-term unemployment.

All of their time is spent in the workplace with in-work training to help develop transferable skills, aimed at increasing their chances of sustained employment.

We've compiled several case studies from businesses making the most of the government incentives, including:

## **South Tyneside Homes**

South Tyneside Homes manages estates and council housing stock on behalf of South Tyneside Council and have 632 employees in the North East of England.

As members of the North East Apprentice Ambassadors Network, South Tyneside Homes were made aware of the Kickstart incentive by the network and applied for incentive payment to support the recruitment of 10 Kickstarters. They will also be applying for the incentive payment for hiring 10 apprentices this year.

As a social landlord, South Tyneside Homes want to promote sustainable employment within their borough. Trainees within the business are paid a wage and the incentive payment will help the business to expand their scheme, whilst they work towards its longevity and creating further, future employment opportunities.

The incentive payment for hiring apprentices will be fully utilised and used towards paying for additional personal protective equipment and further training opportunities for their apprentices.

**Gary Kirsop, Director of Asset and Property Services, South Tyneside Homes said:**

In total we could receive up to £85,000 through government incentives. The Kickstart funding will allow us to expand our trainees into new fields, whilst supporting employment opportunities in South Tyneside; whilst the additional apprenticeship funding will help support our apprenticeship offer.

We have offered work experience in the past and T Levels are something we were discussing with local colleges prior to the pandemic, and this is something we will also look to develop once restrictions in the work place are relaxed.

## Tesco

Supermarket employer Tesco has accessed the government Kickstart incentive to support 1,000 young people, giving them access to work experience and life skills, whilst enabling them to continue to forge their future careers.

[Tesco Kickstart](#)

## Aggregate Industries

Construction materials producer and supplier Aggregate Industries is based across 300 UK sites and employs 3,875 staff. They first heard about government incentives for employers in the news, and from attending information sessions run by the Education and Skills Funding Agency and Confederation of British Industry. Aggregate Industries have applied to be a Kickstart employer and saw this opportunity as a way to get young people into their sector, providing them with an opportunity to learn.

Applying for funding for 39 job placements, Aggregate Industries view the Kickstart incentive as an entry route to their apprenticeship and graduate initiatives.

Those recruited through Kickstarts will work with Aggregate Industries full time, for six-months, before committing to an apprenticeship. Aggregate Industries currently has 127 apprentices in the business.

**Laura Parker, Head of Learning and Development at Aggregate Industries said:**

Kickstart will enable Aggregate Industries to introduce individuals to the sector, who may not naturally have considered this career path, giving individuals opportunity to learn new skills during their placement, whilst being energised about the company and sector.

We are committed to ensuring individuals get real work experience and, after our Kickstarts complete the scheme, we are aiming to offer them apprenticeship and graduate positions. We are also considering recruiting T Level learners in 2021 to offer further opportunities in our sector.

## Molinaire

Post-production company Molinare, specialising in TV, film and video games, have committed to giving more than 30 young people the opportunity of 6 month paid Kickstart placement. Utilising government incentives, Molinaire will support Kickstarters to develop the skills needed to get started in their industry.

## Severn Trent

Midlands water and waste company Severn Trent employ 6700 individuals and will take on 500 people over the next year, as part of the Kickstart incentive.

The company will take on the 500 new people over the course of the next 12 months, with placements lasting for six months and covering 25 hours a week. Severn Trent will offer a range of roles, including water technicians, engineering assistants, customer liaison, project management and support function roles in Finance, HR and Communications, typical of any large business. Alongside the on the job training, Severn Trent are also offering training in a variety personal and technical skills at their new academy, based in Coventry.

### **Liv Garfield, Severn Trent Chief Executive, said:**

This is a simply brilliant incentive and, after looking at it, we just knew we could support many, many people who might otherwise be at risk of simply not being able to get back into the workforce.

We're absolutely certain we'll find a load of really talented people who, at the very least, will leave us with a range of new skills they might be able to put to use with other employers. We're also pretty certain we'll end up with a number of new colleagues who'll have impressed so much during their placement we absolutely had to take them on full-time.

Given everything that's happening at the moment, this is one of the key ways we, as a responsible company, can help make a real difference to our customers and our communities. It's a real opportunity for us, let alone for the Kickstarters.

## Crowberry Consulting

Award winning apprentice employer Crowberry Consulting Ltd, based in Lancashire, is an SME with three employees, working in the professional services sector as Sustainability Consultants.

Crowberry Consulting has employed apprentices since 2012; and this year have been recognised for their commitment to apprenticeships by winning the National Apprenticeship Service 'SME Employer of the Year' award in the North West.

Managing Director Becky Toal, of Crowberry Consulting, with her National Apprenticeships Award

Currently working with North and West Lancashire Chamber of Commerce, Crowberry Consulting are looking to recruit two new Kickstart employees, in Digital Marketing and in Community Energy, anticipating these roles will evolve into Level 3 or 4 apprenticeships. They will receive £3,000 in incentives to support the recruitment and training of both Kickstart employees.

**Becky Toal, Managing Director, Crowberry Consulting Ltd said:**

Crowberry Consulting are a signatory to the Lancashire Skills Pledge and are also apprenticeship champions for both the employer and apprentice; signalling our commitment to skills.

We are delighted to have the opportunity to receive financial incentives to expand our workforce and to support individuals from unemployment to a secure employment opportunity. The successful applicants will work with a local college to receive ongoing mentoring and support, gaining a valuable qualification at the end of their training.

## **West Berkshire County Council**

West Berkshire Council employ over 1550 people in the South East of England. They are accessing government incentives, including Kickstart and are supporting the programme by engaging with local businesses to take on 60 Kickstart placements, including 13 of which will be internal placements.

Accessing the Kickstart incentive, totalling £37,500, will enable West Berkshire Council to support their proposed, long term apprenticeship strategy. The Council hopes to convert successful Kickstart placements into apprenticeships at the end of the placements.

Funds received through incentives will be used for a variety of projects, including supporting more services to take on disadvantaged young people as apprentices and providing funding for job mentors or job coach training for both corporate and schools staff. The funding will also help where barriers exist, with travel costs, PPE, or equipment for work, which may impact on young people accessing the work environment.

The Council are also an apprenticeship employer, with 123 current apprentices in the business, in roles including Business Administration, Social Work, Teaching, Occupational Therapy, Regulatory Compliance, Adult Social Care, Accountancy and Management & Leadership. Fifty apprentices recently completed their programme and in recent months the Council has taken on, or are planning to start, a number of new apprentices. Six new apprentices have started since 1 August, and the incentive payment for hiring a new apprentices will be able accessed for these apprentices.

**Abigail Witting, HR Manager, West Berkshire Council said:**

Both the Kickstart scheme and the incentives for new apprentices are positive for businesses.

The Kickstart scheme enables businesses to take on an individuals to support with the impact of the COVID crisis, as well as supporting young people who are being disadvantaged by the impact on the economy and jobs with minimal risk/cost to the business. Following a successful placement, businesses may be able to take on a new member of staff that they previously wouldn't have had opportunity to recruit.

The incentive payments for new apprentices provide businesses with some funding when they are facing difficult times, to help support the inevitable costs of inducting and training a new staff member, and the associated costs including salaries or equipment.