

Press release: Justice Secretary announces ambitious first steps in overhaul of Parole Board

Justice Secretary David Gauke ordered a review of Parole Board processes in January, with the purpose of increasing its transparency, restoring public confidence, and improving the treatment of victims. The [findings of the urgent review have been published](#) alongside a comprehensive package of reforms that include:

- Initial legislation to immediately remove the ‘blanket ban’ on transparency and a change in the rules to allow the Parole Board to explain its decisions to victims, media and the public
- Proposals to, for the first time, allow Parole Board decisions to be challenged through a judge-led process that could in some circumstances be open to the public
- Immediate changes to expand the Victim Contact Scheme to include more people and to improve the way the department communicates with victims

One immediate result of this work is the introduction of transparency to the parole process by amending Rule 25 to remove the blanket ban that prevents the Parole Board from disclosing information about its decision-making.

This change will also require the Parole Board to provide an overview of the arguments it heard in a case, the recommendations of expert witnesses, the offender’s progress and risk factors, the evidence provided by the offender and the reasons for the panel’s decision.

The removal of the ‘blanket ban’ and amending Rule 25 is an immediate first step on transparency which ensures compliance with the ruling of the Judicial Review of the Worboys case. But we will not stop there.

The department will carefully assess the impact this has on the Parole Board’s operation, on offenders, and on victims, including whether there are legal challenges, with a view to increasing transparency further, for example potentially automatically publishing summaries online.

We will also consider, as set out in the Terms of Reference for the wider Parole Board Review, whether information about panel members and other details should in some situations be made public.

Increasing transparency was always a priority for the review, but the Justice Secretary has also committed to much wider reforms. This includes a proposal for a new mechanism to force the Parole Board to reconsider a decision, ensuring that victims do not have to resort to Judicial Review to make the Parole Board look at a case again.

This change will be subject to a [consultation](#) launched today, but it is

envisaged that the reconsideration would be led by a judge and oral hearings would be open to victims, media and the public.

The Parole Board's decision to release John Worboys made clear the urgent need to overhaul the process of providing information to victims.

As a result, numerous changes will be made to the Victim Contact Service (VCS) service, including extending it to victims of more types of offences, for example road traffic offences resulting in serious injury, and to victims in cases where a serious charge lies on file but has not resulted in a conviction.

Immediate improvements will also be made to the VCS, including new training for Victim Liaison Officers, better working with other agencies to ensure services are more joined up and making it easier for victims to opt in to the scheme at a later stage in the offender's sentence.

At the same time, the department will explore the potential for changing the scheme so that victims are asked at the beginning to opt-out if they don't want to be kept informed, rather than to opt-in if they do.

Justice Secretary David Gauke said:

Today I am announcing a package of measures to reform the Parole Board and introduce transparency of its decisions. But we are going further and consulting on a new way to challenge Parole Board decisions that would be judge-led and could, in some circumstances, be open to the public. And we're not stopping there.

Today I also produce the terms of reference for our comprehensive review of the entire Parole Board, including whether we should in some circumstances name panel members, whether we should define the panel composition and what kinds of further scrutiny measures should be introduced.

We will also improve the process for victims, who in this case were clearly let down. It is my ambition that the outcome of this process will mean victims have more confidence in the system.

We have moved at pace to address the shortcomings of the Parole system which the Worboys case has brought to light. But we must take a balanced approach. I am determined to lead a thorough reform process, the first action of which we launched today.

Also published today are the [terms of reference](#) for the full review of all 27 Parole Board rules. The terms of reference allow for consideration of whether certain panels should include a judge or psychiatrist, how the Board's decisions should be scrutinised internally before a decision is finalised and how further improvements can be made to transparency. The findings of this work will be published later this year.

The [consultation on a re-consideration mechanism for Parole Board decisions](#) will close in July. The department particularly welcomes submissions from victims and those who have experience of the Parole process.

News story: Plans to strengthen NHS cyber security announced

The deal with Microsoft will ensure all health and care organisations are using the latest Windows 10 software with up-to-date security settings to help prevent cyber attacks.

Since 2017 the government has invested £60 million to address cyber security weaknesses. A further £150 million will be spent over the next 3 years to improve the NHS's resilience against attacks. This will include setting up a new digital security operations centre to prevent, detect and respond to incidents.

The centre will:

- allow NHS Digital to respond to cyber attacks more quickly
- allow local trusts to detect threats, isolate infected machines and kill the threat before it spreads

Other measures to improve cyber security include:

- £21 million to upgrade firewalls and network infrastructure at major trauma centre hospitals and ambulance trusts
- £39 million spent by NHS trusts to address infrastructure weaknesses
- new powers given to the Care Quality Commission to inspect NHS trusts on their cyber and data security capabilities
- a data security and protection toolkit which requires health and care organisations to meet 10 security standards
- a text messaging alert system to ensure trusts have access to accurate information – even when internet and email services are down

Health and Social Care Secretary Jeremy Hunt said:

We know cyber attacks are a growing threat, so it is vital our health and care organisations have secure systems which patients trust.

We have been building the capability of NHS systems over a number of years, but there is always more to do to future-proof our NHS against this threat.

This new technology will ensure the NHS can use the latest and most resilient software available – something the public rightly expect.

Speech: Supporting self-determination of the people of Western Sahara

Thank you Mr President.

The United Kingdom was pleased to vote in favour of this resolution, which we believe sends a strong signal of the support of this Council in three key areas:

First, support for de-escalation.

Second, support for the continuing work of MINURSO.

And finally, supporting the overall goal of progress towards a lasting and mutually acceptable solution that provides for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara.

With this goal in mind, we encourage the parties to engage now with a political process in a spirit of realism and compromise. The six-month window provided by the resolution is an opportunity and an indication of the importance the international community attaches to achieving progress. Another indication is the appointment of the new Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, and the commitment he has already shown in his first months to finding a solution. The United Kingdom strongly supports the efforts of Personal Envoy Koehler, as well as the work of MINURSO and its new head, Mr Colin Stewart. We call on all concerned to engage positively over the coming months, in line with both the spirit and the letter of this resolution.

Thank you.

News story: Defence Secretary announces latest wave of cadet units in schools

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson at Phoenix Collegiate School in West Bromwich. Crown copyright.

Schools across the UK will benefit from the latest round of openings, including three in East Anglia, two in the East Midlands, four in Greater London, one in the North East, four in the North West, one in the South East, six in the West Midlands, three in Yorkshire & Humberside, one in Scotland and one in Wales.

The announcement came as the Defence Secretary had the opportunity to meet cadets at Phoenix Collegiate School in West Bromwich and see first-hand the new skills that students have gained.

Speaking at the event, Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Being a cadet offers students unrivalled opportunities to develop new skills, enjoy unforgettable life experiences, and be inspired by our world class Armed Forces.

I'm delighted to announce a new round of cadet units in schools across the UK, showing our commitment to ensure students from all backgrounds have the chance to fulfil their potential.

The cadets I met today impressed me with their confidence, problem solving and teamwork – skills that will stand them in good stead in the future.

Phoenix Collegiate was approved in the last wave of cadet units, and has been on parade now for over a year.

The latest round of cadet units ensures the Government remains on target to have a total of 500 running in the UK by 2020. 418 cadet units are already up and running and this latest wave takes the total approved units to 453. Many are opened in less prosperous areas where opportunities for cadet units were previously limited.

The Cadet Expansion Programme is backed by £50 million funding from Libor fines, which covers set up costs, uniforms, equipment and training. The benefits of the cadet experience were highlighted in an independent report published by Northamptonshire University, which found that being a cadet can increase social mobility and help disadvantaged children reach their potential.

Robert Goodwill MP is also conducting independent research into how schools can best utilise their cadet units; assessing the benefits of having a military ethos and values in schools provides to its pupils. The findings will be completed by the end of September 2018.

[Press release: Fund for bright disadvantaged pupils launched](#)

- £23 million programme to support the brightest pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds to reach their potential
- Applications open for organisations to manage fund, which runs until 2020

New work to raise education standards for the country's brightest pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds will begin today (27 April) as Education Minister Nick Gibb invites organisations to manage new funding designed to support their academic attainment.

The £23 million Future Talent Fund programme will test new and innovative ways of helping the most talented disadvantaged pupils to remain on their high performing trajectory and prevent them falling behind their more affluent peers.

The new fund manager will run and evaluate a trial of projects from January 2019 which will help all schools to support their most able, disadvantaged pupils – to address the drop off in academic performance between key stage 2 and key stage 4.

This will help to build on the government's record, with 1.9 million more children now in good or outstanding schools than in 2010 and the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers narrowing by 10% at secondary and 10.5% at primary since 2011.

School Standards Minister Nick Gibb said,

Academic standards are rising, with 1.9 million more children in good or outstanding schools than 2010 and importantly, the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers narrowing. But we want to make sure every child reaches their full potential and is not held back because of their circumstances.

Through this Future Talent Fund we will test new and innovative

approaches so that we can find out what works best to ensure the brightest pupils from the most disadvantaged families can excel in their education.

Today's announcement builds on wider efforts to support disadvantaged pupils and raise standards across the country, including:

- £72 million to support 12 Opportunity Areas to improve the life chances of young people in disadvantaged communities;
- The government's social mobility action plan Unlocking Talent, Fulfilling Potential which focuses £800million of resources on helping children make the most of their lives; and
- 75 projects sharing £25million to provide more support for schools, many of which will increase pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, and help to the attainment gap.

The £23 million programme will deliver at least 30 trial projects between January 2019 and July 2020 following two bidding rounds. The scheme will champion best practice and encourage evidence-led interventions, including those that could be funded by schools using their Pupil Premium funding.

In the autumn, a variety of organisations will be eligible to apply for the funding. This will include state-funded schools and multi academy trusts, charities and research organisations, independent schools and universities. Projects supported by the fund must be delivered in non-selective, state-funded secondary schools in England and will cover at least one of the following strands of work:

- Curriculum: such as broadening or deepening what is covered in the curriculum;
- Pedagogy: for example, individualised teaching, the use of digital technology or feedback;
- Parental involvement: which could include aspiration interventions, engagement through technology or behavioural insight techniques;
- Mentoring and tutoring: including academic mentoring, community based mentoring, school based mentoring, one-to-one tuition, group tuition or peer tutoring;
- Transition between key stages: such as summer schools or transition

practices in schools; and

- Enrichment activities: which could include after-school classes, extra-curricular activities or visits.

Academic standards are rising following the introduction of a more rigorous school curriculum and gold standard GCSEs and A levels to bring our education system level with the best in the world. Latest performance data shows:

- In 2017 72% met the expected standard in reading, 75% in maths and 77% in grammar, punctuation and spelling at KS2 and overall, the proportion reaching the expected standard has improved by 8 percentage points on the previous year;
- The attainment gap between disadvantaged secondary school pupils and their peers has narrowed by 3.2% since last year and 10% since 2011; and
- More pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, Special Educational Needs (SEN) pupils and pupils on free school meals are being entered for English Baccalaureate (EBacc) subjects compared to last year, ensuring pupils have the knowledge and skills they need for future success.