

## [News story: Help Ofqual evaluate this year's new GCSEs, AS and A levels](#)

We're looking for teachers to attend workshops to help us evaluate the impact of reformed qualifications.

We are inviting teachers from across the country to workshops to offer their perspectives on the assessment of this summer's reformed GCSEs, AS and A levels.

The workshops will be our first opportunity to gather qualitative evidence about things that have gone well and any areas of concern. Your feedback will contribute to our thinking about the effectiveness of the reform programme.

The workshops will be held in November at the [University of Warwick](#) in Coventry. These are free events with a limited number of places. Your travel expenses will be reimbursed and lunch will be provided.

Ideally we would like you to have taught the qualification, in its legacy and reformed version. This is so you can comment on the changes and challenges of the new qualifications and how they have been addressed.

We hope that you are able to take advantage of this opportunity to have your say and share your experiences with us.

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## [News story: Message from Rory Stewart, Minister for Africa](#)

Following his recent appointment as Minister of State for Africa, Rory Stewart said:

I am so excited to have the role of Minister for Africa in both the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department for International Development.

Africa is an extraordinary continent with so much potential: An incredible number of young people, some of the most stunning landscapes in the world and extraordinary new businesses. There is also a great historical relationship between Africa, Europe and the world, which needs to be developed and deepened.

I am really looking forward to learning from Africans, to listening to the experiences of people on the ground and building relationships, that, if we

can get them right, should flourish over 30, 40, 50 years with mutual respect and learning between Africa and the United Kingdom.

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## **News story: CCS is supporting the Public Sector Show 2017**

We are supporting the Public Sector Show once again in 2017.

If you are planning to visit the show we'd love to have the chance to meet with you – whether that is at one of our seminar sessions, or at our stand where you can chat with our senior commercial experts. They will be on hand throughout the day to offer one to one practical procurement advice and answer any questions you may have.

In the main conference theatre Malcolm Harrison, our chief executive, will be speaking about how we can help you deliver savings through better procurement, and we will also be discussing how we are helping make government business more accessible to SMEs.

In our dedicated open theatre we will be hosting a variety of sessions over the course of the day, including:

- An introduction to CCS
- Simplifying the market for public sector buyers
- Disruptive technology: new digital platforms to transform public procurement
- Keeping you updated on public procurement policy and regulations

We're here to help you and look forward to seeing you at the show.

[Register for free.](#)

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## **Speech: Prison reform: open letter from the Justice Secretary**

The work to make our prisons true places of reform and rehabilitation is already under way – and it will continue unabated.

When someone is convicted of a serious crime, they are rightly handed down a

custodial sentence by our courts. They are punished by being sent to prison and losing what we cherish most as citizens – liberty and freedom.

Most will, at some point, be released back into society. So, as well as depriving people of liberty, our prisons must also be places of reform and rehabilitation to support offenders to turn their lives around.

Prisons have been going through a particularly turbulent time and we need to create calm and ordered environments for that effective rehabilitation. That means giving offenders the help they need to get off drugs, and the education, training and support to help them find employment when they leave prison.

In doing this, prisons don't work in isolation. They work within their local communities and with other services – with Probation, Jobcentres, housing, health and drug services, local businesses and charities to provide innovative schemes and initiatives to prepare prisoners for a life after release. We now have more private sector companies employing ex-offenders than ever before. Timpson, Halfords and The Clink Charity are just 3 examples of organisations which do great work with prisons and offenders.

Only by building on this work to reform offenders and support ex-offenders will we stop the vicious and costly cycle of reoffending.

This is my priority and as the new Secretary of State, I am committed to building on the essential reforms that are already under way to make prisons places of safety and reform.

That has to start with the numbers of prison officers available to support offenders. More staff will provide the capacity for them to give more time to directly supervising offenders, through one-to-one support from a key worker. This engagement will be a key measure in reducing the currently unacceptable levels of assaults, self-harm and suicides.

My predecessor has already secured a £100 million a year investment for an extra 2,500 prison officers. The most recent figures show the number of prison officers in post has increased by 515 compared with the previous quarter and we are on track to deliver all 2,500 prison officers by December 2018. They will join thousands of dedicated and hard-working prison officers who undertake such important work, day in day out, to keep our prisons and the public safe.

We are also tackling key issues to improve security and create the opportunity for reform and rehabilitation.

On drugs, we have introduced testing for psychoactive substances across the estate, the first jurisdiction in the world to do so. We have also trained more than 300 dogs to detect these substances, and have introduced tough new laws to deal with people smuggling the substances into prison.

On drones, we are working with the police to catch and convict criminals using drones to smuggle contraband into prisons. We have also established a new team of prison and police officers to directly tackle the threat posed by

drones.

On mobile phones, we are working with mobile network operators to tackle illicit use of phones. We have now fitted out every single prison across the estate with hand-held mobile phone detectors and detection poles to step up the detection of illegal phones on the landings. More than 150 mobile phones have been cut off since the introduction of new powers through the Serious Crime Act.

We are continuing to transform our prison estate to close old and dilapidated prisons and create up to 10,000 new places through a £1.3 billion investment.

We know where the problems lie in our prisons, and we know what is needed to fix them. We are continuing with, and building on, these reforms to ensure prisons are safe and secure and are able to transform the lives of those sent to custody by our courts.

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## [News story: Flexible working for Armed Forces](#)

The changes will deliver a career which is as flexible as possible by allowing service personnel to work part time for short periods, as long as the operational effectiveness of the military is maintained.

The measures, which are due to come into effect in 2019, are part of the Armed Forces (Flexible Working) Bill. They will also limit the amount of time that personnel will need to spend away from their home-base and their families.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

To compete for the best people in society our Armed Forces must offer a career that better reflects the realities of modern life. Allowing greater flexibility over how long and where people work will help attract and keep the talent we need to keep Britain safe.

The Bill will amend parts of the Armed Forces Act 2006, and the new arrangements were developed after a consultation with the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force. Personnel said they wanted more choice over the way they serve for when their circumstances change; such as starting a family, or undertaking caring commitments.

Applications for part time working will be assessed against the needs of the individual and the need of the Armed Forces to maintain operational effectiveness. Personnel would still be required to deploy on operations, at

any time, should the need arise.

This will lead to more balanced lifestyles with opportunities for Service personnel to serve in a way that better suits their personal aspirations and family circumstances. Reserve personnel will benefit from these changes, as we continue to seek to increase opportunities for them to serve in a greater range of roles alongside Regular personnel.

These reforms are part of the modern offer to personnel and the government's commitment to strengthen the Armed Forces Covenant, which was enshrined in law in 2011 to ensure Service personnel are not disadvantaged through their work.

The government also reaffirmed its NATO commitment to spend at least 2% of GDP on defence in the Queen's speech.