

## [News story: Scottish Poppy Appeal's 'Light up Red' campaign comes to Dover House](#)



Dover House illuminated red for the 2018 Scottish Poppy Appeal

Dover House in London was illuminated in red lighting last night [24 October 2018] in support of the 'Light up Red' campaign by Poppyscotland for the 2018 Scottish Poppy Appeal. The campaign, which has been running for several years, sees iconic landmarks across Scotland lit up red. More than 30 venues were lit up last year.

This year the campaign made it to London as the Office of the Secretary of State building, Dover House, was also illuminated in red. This year's campaign also commemorates the Centenary of the end of the First World War.

The Scottish Poppy Appeal raises over £2 million each year supporting members of the Armed Forces community across Scotland. This appeal, along with their year-round fundraising, provides services including advice, employment, mobility, respite, housing and mental health support.

Published 25 October 2018

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## [News story: Drive to ensure all children can swim by end of primary school](#)

Primary schools in England are set to receive extra support and improved guidance to help make sure all children can swim confidently and know how to stay safe in and around water.

Working in partnership with Swim England, the Department for Education and Department for Digital, Culture Media and Sport have today (Thursday 25 October) announced extra help for schools to make sure every child knows how to swim and be safe in and around water by the end of primary school, supported by the £320 million PE and Sport Premium.

To coincide with the announcement, Children and Families Minister Nadhim Zahawi and Sports Minister Tracey Crouch have also backed a pledge by Swim England – signed by the likes of British Olympic swimmer Steve Parry – calling on teachers and parents to do all they can to ensure children are taught swimming and water safety at primary school.

The extra support will help deliver the government's sport strategy 'Sporting Future', which committed to ensuring that every child leaves primary school able to swim. It includes:

- using the PE and Sport Premium for extra lessons for children who have not yet met the national curriculum expectation after core swimming lessons, and extra training for teachers on water safety and swimming techniques through courses provided by Swim England;
- extra guidance, provided by Swim England, will be available to help schools deliver safe, fun and effective swimming lessons; and
- a drive to boost partnerships with independent schools to offer the use of facilities, coaching and other forms of support to schools in their area.

Children and Families Minister Nadhim Zahawi said:

Swimming is great fun and helps children to stay fit and healthy. But swimming at school also teaches children vital skills on how to stay safe in and around water.

We want every child to be a confident swimmer by the time they leave primary school. By funding extra lessons for the pupils that need it most, providing extra training for our teachers and working with our independent schools to offer access to their pools and expertise, we can help children stay safe and learn to love swimming.

Tracey Crouch, Minister for Sport and Civil Society, said:

Swimming is a vital life skill that is proven to boost both physical and mental wellbeing.

We are committed to ensuring that every child who leaves primary school is able to swim. This plan will support schools and the sport sector to get more children swimming confidently and learn water safety.

The measures announced today follow a government-backed review of swimming and water safety in primary schools, which found that swimming standards vary in schools, despite being compulsory on the national curriculum. Following its recommendations, the government is working with Swim England to provide extra guidance to help schools deliver safe, fun and effective swimming lessons.

Steve Parry, Olympic bronze medallist and Chair of the Swimming and Water Safety Review Group, said:

Since my competitive days I've been championing the need for all children to be taught swimming and water safety at primary school. Along with Swim England and the Swim Group, we have been working to raise awareness of the issues and provide support for all those involved in the delivery of curriculum swimming and water safety.

Ensuring our children are able to enjoy the water safely is everyone's responsibility. That is why it's great to hear the government is raising awareness of the issue and pledging its support. We want everyone – schools, parents, lesson providers, decision makers – to do likewise and pledge to support schools to achieve our joint vision of every child having a full knowledge about water safety and learning how to swim by the time they leave primary school.

Julie Robinson, Independent Schools Council general secretary, said:

We completely agree that all primary age pupils should learn to swim – it is a basic life skill. Many independent schools with swimming pools are already working in partnership with state schools and the wider community to ensure others have the opportunity to benefit.

There is much goodwill from schools fortunate to have facilities that may be in short supply locally, and the Schools Together website features plenty of examples of partnership working.

Raising awareness of partnerships and encouraging more of this good work helps state schools and independent schools develop mutually beneficial programmes, which provide education and development opportunities to all pupils and staff involved.

Today's announcement is part of a drive to tackle childhood obesity and help children to lead healthy, active lives, with more than £1 billion invested in schools through the PE and Sport Premium to improve PE and sport since 2013.

It comes after the Education Secretary announced a cross-government school sport and activity action plan that will consider ways to ensure all children have access to quality, protected PE and sport sessions during the school

week and opportunities to be physically active throughout the school day. The action plan will be launched in spring 2019.

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## [News story: £93 million missile project secures over 100 Belfast jobs](#)

The £93 million Future Air Defence Availability Project (F-ADAPT) was awarded to Thales UK during Minister Andrew's visit to Belfast today. The contract will secure over 100 jobs in the city and provide the UK Armed Forces with a potent defensive ability.

The project will enhance the High Velocity and Lightweight Multi-role Missile systems which are designed to intercept a wide range of air and surface threats such as enemy drones, helicopters and armoured vehicles. The upgrades include thermal imaging which ensures the High Velocity Missile system can be used 24 hours a day and 'Friend or Foe' identification, which will maximise intelligence on potential threats and targets.

The F-ADAPT, secured by the MOD's procurement agency Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S), will ensure that this critical capability is maintained during peacetime training but can also be rapidly deployed for operations into the 2020s.

Defence Minister Stuart Andrew said:

Defence investment benefits every corner of our United Kingdom and Northern Ireland is no exception. This £93 million deal will secure over 100 local jobs and demonstrates the ingenuity and skill of Northern Irish industry.

In these uncertain times, it is crucial we protect ourselves from the rapidly evolving spectrum of global threats. These cutting-edge missile systems will fortify our military advantage over adversaries and help protect UK Armed Forces across the world and into the next decade.

DE&S Director Weapons, Richard Smart said:

The F-ADAPT is crucial in safeguarding our Very Short-Range Air Defence capability and the team at DE&S has worked collaboratively with industry to deliver the enhancements needed to ensure this project continues to support our troops for years to come.

Thales has a long and illustrious presence in Belfast dating back to 1952. Thales in Belfast is a world leader in the design and development of light weight weapon systems for tactical air, land and sea platforms. The company has over 500 local employees and has secured contracts worth hundreds of millions from the Ministry of Defence in recent years. The Belfast office contributed to Thales UK's record exports in 2017 which were worth over £500 million. The local economy also benefitted from a £6 million investment from Thales Alenia Space in 2016 which transformed the capital city into a global centre for excellence in electric propulsion systems.

Defence Minister Stuart Andrew at Thales Belfast. Crown copyright.

Northern Ireland plays an important role in UK defence, providing over 4,000 regulars and reserves to the Armed Forces, supporting over 600 industry jobs and is renowned for its defence manufacturing industry. Industry has committed to more than double its revenue from the aerospace, defence, security and space activities in the region to over £2 billion a year. Northern Ireland companies are part of the overall Ministry of Defence equipment and support plan to spend £180 billion over the decade to 2026-27 which will enhance prosperity across the UK.

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## **Statement to Parliament: Home Secretary statement on the use of DNA evidence in immigration applications**

An internal review of the government's policy on the use of DNA in immigration applications was commissioned in July 2018 and [the report](#) and findings were published today.

Following the review, a taskforce and dedicated helpline have been set up so that anyone who feels that their immigration case may have been influenced by an inappropriate demand for DNA testing, can get advice and support.

If you think you may have been affected, please call 0300 123 2235. The line is open Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm (4.30pm on Friday).

### **The Home Secretary's statement to the House of Commons**

With permission Madame Deputy Speaker, I would like to make a statement on the use of DNA evidence in immigration applications.

Many thousands of immigration applications are received every year which involve people applying to come to the UK or remain in the UK, on the basis of a family relationship with someone already here.

If an individual does not have sufficient evidence to show that they are related to someone in the UK, they sometimes choose to do a DNA test to prove that relationship.

Officials will then consider this evidence as part of their claim.

Very often, this will be to the advantage of the applicant because it can help establish family relationships beyond doubt where the other available evidence is sometimes insufficient.

However, the provision of DNA evidence must be entirely voluntary.

At the end of June, it was brought to our attention that there were some immigration cases where the provision of DNA evidence had been made a requirement for issuing a visa or grant leave to remain, and it was not simply a request.

Such demands are unacceptable.

Today I want to take this opportunity to apologise to those who have been affected by this practice. The law in this context is that the provision of DNA evidence should always be voluntary and never mandatory.

My predecessor made this absolutely clear when the changes were made that she brought in in 2014.

Once we were made aware of the issue, we immediately commissioned an urgent internal review, which I am publishing today.

Copies will be available in the House library.

My RHF the Immigration Minister will also be writing today to the Home Affairs Select Committee outlining the key points of the review and of course providing a copy.

The review covered the legal aspects of DNA use, policy and guidance, case working practice and correspondence with applicants, as well as oversight arrangements relating to the use of DNA.

It outlines a number of areas in which guidance was unclear or wrong.

It also outlines areas of operational practice where DNA evidence was improperly required and provides some initial information on the possible scale of the issue.

The review makes a number of recommendations about how to address the root causes within the Border, Immigration and Citizenship system that led to the operational practice.

However, this review is not a conclusion to the work.

The numbers and the information in the report have been collected at pace and they still need to be fully assured that this is subject to change.

Further work is needed to ascertain the full scope of the issue.

But regardless of the numbers of people that have been affected – one case is still one too many.

I am determined to get to the bottom of how and why in some cases, people could be compelled to supply DNA evidence in the first place.

The majority of cases identified so far have been part of an Operation known as Operation Fugal, an operation which the report says started in April 2016 to address patterns of fraud in some specific family and human rights applications for immigration purposes

Letters sent, as part of this operation incorrectly stated that the applicant must provide DNA evidence and that not providing such information without a reasonable excuse would lead to their application being refused on suitability grounds.

It has been reported that 83 applications had been refused at the time of the writing of the report.

Seven of these seem to have been refused on suitability grounds solely for the failure to provide DNA evidence.

And a further six appear to have been refused on suitability grounds for failure to provide DNA evidence, but where that was not the sole reason.

In addition to Operation Fugal, we have also identified improper approach to the use of DNA evidence in 2 further areas.

The first relates to adult dependent relatives of Gurkhas.

In January 2015, a scheme was expanded allowing adult dependent children of Gurkhas discharged before 1997, to settle in the UK.

Guidance was published which stated that DNA evidence may be required, and that applications may be refused if that evidence was not provided without a reasonable excuse within 4 weeks.

This published guidance was wrong and has now been updated.

The report suggests that there were 51 cases identified where DNA was requested from applicants at their own cost.

At the same time the report was written, we were aware of four cases from the same family unit, who had their application refused solely because they did not provide DNA evidence.

These decisions have now been corrected.

The second case relates to Afghan nationals.

In 2013, applications from Afghan nationals formerly employed by the UK government to resettle in the UK were begun to be accepted.

The terms of the scheme included mandatory DNA testing for family groups, paid for by the UK government.

Current investigations suggest that no-one making an application under this scheme has been refused because they did not take a DNA test.

Nonetheless, mandatory testing should not have been part of this scheme and this requirement has now been removed.

Let me be clear, Madame Deputy Speaker Across our immigration system, no-one should have faced a demand to supply DNA evidence and no-one should have been penalised for not providing it.

In particular, I would like extend my apologies to those Gurkhas and Afghans who have been affected.

The two schemes I've described were put in place to help the families of those who have served to keep our country safe.

And I am sorry that demands were made of them which never should have been.

But I would like to reassure the House that I am taking action to correct this situation. Firstly, I have given clear instructions that officials must not seek DNA evidence on a mandatory basis in any immigration case.

Secondly, I have set up a new taskforce so that anyone who feels that their case may have been influenced in any way by an inappropriate demand for DNA testing, so that they can get advice and support.

Thirdly, we will also be looking to reimburse any individual who has suffered financial loss because we required DNA evidence when we shouldn't have done so.

Fourthly, we will continue to closely examine whether this approach might have been taken in any other part of the immigration system.

What we know so far is that there are three cohorts that have been affected, but we must investigate to see if there are any more.

I will be asking for independent assurance on everything we do as we establish the facts.

And fifthly, I know that the immigration system is operated by many highly committed people...

...but we must make sure that the structures and processes that they use are fit for the modern world.

And fit for the a immigration system we will be bringing in as we leave the European Union.

So I will review the structures and processes more broadly that we have to ensure they can deliver a system in a way which is fair and humane.



I will now consider what form that review will take.

But my starting point for this is that it would be helpful to have independent oversight of said review.

And that review will need to build on the lessons learnt from the Wendy Williams review also.

And I will want Wendy to play a full part in this wider exercise.

Madame Deputy Speaker I made it clear when I became Home Secretary that I will take any action necessary to put right wrongs or inconsistencies as and when I become aware of them.

Today I want to promise you that I will get to the bottom of what has gone on in relation to DNA evidence.

And I will build an immigration system which provides control but which is also fair, humane and fully compliant with the law.

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## **News story: New fund to support vulnerable EU citizens apply for settled status**

The Home Office has today (Thursday 25 October) announced grant funding of up to £9 million to support EU citizens who might need additional help when applying for their immigration status through the [EU Settlement Scheme](#).

The Home Office has been working closely with voluntary and community organisations across the UK representing the needs of potentially vulnerable EU citizens.

The grant will help these organisations to both inform vulnerable individuals about the need to apply for settled status and support them to complete their applications to protect their status as the UK exits the EU.

Immigration Minister Caroline Nokes said:

EU citizens are our neighbours, our friends and our family and we want them to stay.

It is essential that those who are more vulnerable and require support are able to access the help that they need.

This funding and our work with the voluntary and community sector

will help ensure that every EU citizen who is eligible to stay has their status protected.

Jane Ide, Chief Executive at National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NVCA), said:

It is encouraging that the government has recognised and actively drawn on the local voluntary sector's expertise in working with the most marginalised and disadvantaged members of our communities in planning for this crucially important programme of work.

We look forward to continuing to work with the Home Office to ensure that the local voluntary sector is given all the tools and resources it needs to effectively enable every EU citizen in this country, no matter how vulnerable, to access the support they need at this time of enormous change.

Organisations working with people who might be affected and require additional support can apply for project funding from the end of November.

Earlier this month, the Home Office announced the [next phase of the rollout of the EU Settlement Scheme](#). From 1 November to 21 December the private test phase will be extended to include vulnerable people with additional support needs with the involvement of a small number of local authorities and community organisations. The scheme will be fully open by March 2019.