

[News story: 20th International Chemical Weapons Demilitarisation Conference](#)

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The Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) is hosting the two day event on 25 to 26 May 2017. Registration is now open.

The Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) is hosting the 20th annual International Chemical Weapons Demilitarisation Conference. The two day event on 25 to 26 May 2017 is at the [Park Plaza Hotel Victoria London](#) along with an informal networking session at the hotel on the eve of the conference.

The International Chemical Weapons Demilitarisation (CWD) conference brings together the world's largest gathering of professionals involved in the demilitarisation of chemical weapons. It provides the opportunity to showcase the global progress in chemical weapon destruction and enables delegates to develop their knowledge and understanding with a common goal of a safer, cleaner world. There will be representation from policy and decision makers across international organisations, UK government, the armed forces, industry, academia and research and development establishments worldwide.

The conference supports the global effort to eliminate chemical weapons and fosters co-operation through the exchange of information and ideas relating to the safe disposal.

Conference topics

The proposed topics for the conference are:

- programme planning, technology selection, facility construction, operations, safe closure of CWD facilities and environmental remediation and health and safety
- expedient destruction methods – how to reduce time and cost
- disposal of chemical weapons precursors in commercial facilities
- removal and destruction of chemical weapon precursors from Libya
- exchange of best practice
- chemical safety and security
- waste management
- explosive detonation technology
- recovery of chemical weapons from seas and rivers/lakes
- innovative technologies and services

- laboratory and analytical techniques/instrumentation
- analytical methods – environmental and biomedical

Register

To register please contact the [CWD conference organiser](#). Registration closes at 11.59pm on Friday 12 May 2017. You do not have to submit an abstract to register for this event.

Submit an abstract

To submit an abstract to present your work at this year's conference, please contact the [CWD conference organiser](#). Abstracts should be submitted by 4.00pm Friday 31 March 2017.

Further information

For more information please contact the [CWD conference organiser](#).

[Read an article on last year's conference.](#)

[Press release: Education Secretary visits Derby on opportunity areas tour](#)

Education Secretary Justine Greening visited Derby on Thursday 2 February, 1 of 12 opportunity areas aimed at boosting education, skills and opportunity in social mobility 'cold spots'.

Ms Greening visited the Derby Moor Community Sports College to meet students, teachers and local education leaders who are benefiting from the Prince's Trust Team programme, which helps unemployed 16- to 25-year-olds to get into work or training.

The opportunity areas will see DfE working with local organisations, including early years providers, schools, colleges, universities, the voluntary sector and businesses to help local children and young people get the best start in life, no matter what their background.

These areas will focus not just on what can be done inside schools to tackle social mobility, but also create the opportunities outside school that will help broaden horizons for young people.

Plans are being drawn up to put the £72 million funding for the 12 opportunity areas into action. Local organisations will have the opportunity to help shape these plans so that they are tailored to meet the different challenges that exist across England in regards to social mobility.

During the visit, the charity [Teach First](#) announced that it will increase the number of its teaching placements in Derby in 2017. That will see 8 more talented graduates teaching in schools in Derby by 2017 – up from the current 14 placements.

The charity will also be increasing the number of placements in 5 other opportunity areas by 40% in September 2017. Those areas are:

- Blackpool
- Norwich
- Oldham
- Scarborough
- West Somerset

Education Secretary Justine Greening said:

As Britain prepares for its future outside the EU, it's never been more important that everyone in our country has a fair chance to go as far as their talent and their hard work will take them.

On my previous visits to Derby as Education Secretary, I've seen the great work being done at the University of Derby, and just recently I met apprentices honing their skills at Bombardier.

Each visit reinforces to me just how crucial for our nation's success it is that none of these talents are wasted, and especially the talent of young people growing up in Derby.

Whether it's providing more good school places across Derby and the rest of England, investing in improving careers education, transforming the quality of further and technical education or opening up access to our world-class higher education system, working together I believe we can create more opportunities for future generations to go as far as their talents will take them. And I want to see Derby leading the way.

Brett Wigdortz, CEO and Founder of Teach First said:

The government's recent commitment to investing funding and support into these opportunity areas has been unanimously welcomed by the education sector as a positive step forward in ensuring all our young people, no matter where they were born, are given the same opportunity to succeed.

We're proud to work in partnership with the government in these areas, by placing more Teach First participants than ever before into these communities – working collaboratively to raise the attainment and achieve the aspirations of all our young people.

News story: Security in our court and tribunal buildings

We want HM Courts & Tribunals Service (HMCTS) to be a safe and secure environment for all our users. To avoid delays, speed up entry, and to ensure people's safety, the following articles should not be brought into HMCTS premises.

- ANY type of knife or bladed article – for example pen knives, key-ring knives, belt knives, craft knives, butter knives or other cutlery.
- 'Sharps' – for example, scissors, syringes (unless these are for medical purposes), craft needles.
- Replica guns – for example lighters or jewellery that looks like a gun or toy gun.
- Work tools – for example hammers, screwdrivers, wrenches, nails.
- Alcohol.

Please also note that photography on court premises and recording by members of the public is not allowed.

By law, our security officers can search and remove the above items and any items that could be used as a weapon or may otherwise interfere with the maintenance of order or safety of persons in our buildings before you enter the building. If the security team have concerns about an item, they may refer this to a judge.

All bags are visually searched and you will be asked to go through a security arch or be scanned with a hand held detector before entering the building. You may also be asked to remove your coat, jacket, headgear, belt, gloves or footwear– this is similar to what happens when you check-in at an airport.

Any visitor who is in possession of any of the articles listed above will not be allowed in the court building.

In some circumstances, the security team will let you leave these articles in storage at your own risk. You will be given a receipt so that you can get your property back when leaving the building. Any knives or bladed articles taken, providing they are not an offensive weapon, will only be returned to you if you write to us within 28 days of attendance. Please ask for further information on how to make this request as certain information will need to be provided when making this request.

Offensive weapons found by our search procedures are confiscated and the holder reported to the police.

If a visitor refuses to be searched, they may be removed from, or not let in the building.

Please follow this advice when you come to a court or tribunal. Safety is important.

Statement to Parliament: Housing white paper: statement

Thank you, Mr Speaker, and with your permission I would like to make a statement on the government's [Housing white paper: Fixing our broken housing market](#), copies of which I have placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

I had hoped this white paper would dominate the headlines this morning, but it seems someone else beat me to it!

Our housing market is broken.

Since 1970, house price inflation in Britain has far outstripped the rest of the OECD.

The idea of owning or renting a safe, secure place of your own is, for many, a distant dream.

Over the past 7 years the government has done much to help.

We've taken action on both supply and demand.

And the results have been positive.

Last year saw a record number of planning permissions granted, and the highest level of housing completions since the recession.

Between 1997 and 2010 the ratio of average house price to average income more than doubled, from 3.5 to 7.

But in the 5 years to 2015 it crept up only a little, to just over 7.5.

But still, Mr Speaker, heading in the wrong direction.

And behind the statistics are millions of ordinary working people.

I'm talking about the first-time buyer who's saving hard but won't have enough for a deposit for almost a quarter of a century.

Or the couple in the private rented sector handing half their combined income straight to their landlord.

The symptoms of this broken market are being felt by real people in every community.

It's one of the biggest barriers to social progress this country faces.

But its root cause is simple.

For far too long, we have not built enough houses.

Relative to population size, Britain has had Western Europe's lowest rate of house-building for 3 decades.

The situation reached its nadir under the last Labour government, when in one year work began on only 95,000 homes – the lowest peacetime level since the 1920s.

Thanks to the concerted efforts of central and local government, last year 190,000 new homes were completed.

But that's still not enough.

To meet demand, we have to deliver between 225,000 and 275,000 homes every year.

In short, we have to build more of the right houses in the right places.

And we have to start right now.

Today's white paper sets out how we will go about doing so.

But house building doesn't just happen.

Meeting the unique needs of different people and different places requires a co-ordinated effort across the public and private sector.

This means there's no one single magic bullet that can fix the problem.

Rather, we need action on many fronts simultaneously.

First, we need to plan properly so we get the right homes built in the right places.

To make that happen, we are going to introduce a new way of assessing housing need.

Many councils work tirelessly to engage their communities on the number, design and mix of new housing in their area.

But some of them duck the difficult decisions and fail to produce plans that actually meet their housing need.

It is important that all authorities play by the same rules.

We need to have a proper conversation about housing need, and we need to ensure that every local area produces a realistic plan which they review at least every five years.

Once we know how many homes are needed where, we need sites on which to build them.

So the white paper contains measures that will help us identify appropriate sites for development.

Not simply empty spaces, but usable, practical sites where new homes are actually required.

Let me reassure the House that this will not entail recklessly ripping up our countryside.

In 2015 we promised the British people that the green belt was safe in our hands.

And that is still the case.

This white paper does not remove any of its protections.

Government shouldn't be in the business of land-banking, so we will free up more public sector land more quickly.

We will increase transparency around land ownership, so everyone knows if someone is unfairly sitting on a site that could be better used.

And people need a say in the homes that are built in their area.

So everywhere must have a plan in place and ensure communities are comfortable with the design and the appearance of new homes.

The second area of focus is all about speeding up the rate of build-out.

At the moment we're simply not building quickly enough.

Whether it's caused by unacceptable land-banking or slow construction, we will no longer tolerate such unjustified delays.

We will speed up and simplify the completion notice process.

We will make the planning system more open and accessible.

We will improve the co-ordination of public investment in infrastructure and support timely connections to utilities.

And we will tackle unnecessary delays caused by everything from planning conditions to great crested newts.

We'll be giving developers a lot of help to get building.

And we'll give local authorities the tools to hold developers to account if they fail to do so.

Local authorities also have a vital role to play in getting homes built quickly and I am therefore looking again at how they can use compulsory

purchase powers.

We will also introduce a new Housing Delivery Test to hold them to account for house-building across their local area.

Finally, the white paper explains how we will diversify the housing market.

At present, around 60% of new homes are built by just 10 companies.

Small independent builders can find it almost impossible to enter the market.

This lack of competition means a lack of innovation, which in turn leads to sluggish productivity growth.

So we will make it easier for small and medium-sized builders to compete.

We will support efficient, innovative and under-used methods of construction, such as off-site factory builds.

We will also support housing associations to build more, and explore options to encourage local authorities to build again, including through accelerated construction schemes on public sector land.

We will encourage institutional investment in the private rented sector.

And we will make life easier for custom builders who want to create their own home.

Together, these measures will make a significant and lasting difference to our housing supply.

But, Mr Speaker, it will take time.

And ordinary working people need help right now.

We have already promised to ban letting agents' fees, and this white paper goes further.

We will improve safeguards in the private rented sector, do more to prevent homelessness and help households who are currently priced out of the market.

We will tackle the scourge of unfair leasehold terms, which are too often forced onto hard-pressed homebuyers.

And we will be working with the rental sector to promote 3-year tenancy agreements, giving families the security they need to put down roots in their community.

Mr Speaker, in the past few years, we have seen almost 300,000 affordable home units built in England.

We have seen housing starts increase sharply.

And we have seen more people getting on the property ladder thanks to schemes

such as Help to Buy.

Now we need to go further, much further, and meet our obligation to build many more houses, of the type people want to live in, and the places they want to live.

That's what exactly what this white paper will deliver.

It will help the tenants of today, facing rising rents, unfair fees and insecure tenancies.

It will help the home owners of tomorrow, getting more of the right homes built in the right places.

And it will help our children and our children's children by halting decades of decline and fixing our broken housing market.

It's a bold, radical vision for housing in this country, and I commend it to the House.

Press release: Separated parents working together on child maintenance arrangements

The parents of more than 15,900 children have set up 'family-based arrangements' for paying child maintenance after receiving information and support from Child Maintenance Options, which was set up in 2008 to help separated parents work together in the best interests of their children.

Child Maintenance Options provides free, impartial support to help parents come to their own arrangements. Then, if that is not possible, they can turn to the Child Maintenance Service (CMS). The CMS supports parents to manage payments between themselves where they can, and helps those in difficult or vulnerable situations.

Minister for Welfare Delivery Caroline Nokes said:

We know children grow up to have better health, emotional well-being and educational attainment if their parents – whether together or separated – have a positive relationship. All children deserve the best start in life and that's why, through Child Maintenance Options, we encourage separated couples to work together in the best interests of their children.

But we also understand a minority of separated parents, especially

those in difficult or vulnerable circumstances, won't be able to come to their own arrangements and our staff can give them that extra help.

Of the family based arrangements made by parents, for 87%, payments were regularly being made and a parent said it was working well.

The CMS is replacing the old Child Support Agency, which failed families because it was overly complex and did not encourage collaboration, plus did not provide value for taxpayers' money.

Child Maintenance Options is there to help parents work things out. [Child Maintenance Options](#) is a free service that provides impartial information and support to help separated parents make decisions about their child maintenance arrangements.

Talking about child maintenance might feel like the last thing you want to do, especially if your relationship with the other parent is strained. But, in the long run, having this conversation as early as possible could mean you end up working together as parents rather than against each other.

DWP Child Maintenance Options Service Manager Ian Wilkins said:

It can be tough when a family separates, but we know it is better for children if their parents can work together to reach an agreement on caring for them, including decisions about financial arrangements. Our staff are highly trained in providing support to separated, and separating, parents and have vast experience of dealing with a wide range of separation issues. If you require any information or support, please don't hesitate to get in touch with us.

Ian's 5 steps to working together on a family-based arrangement for your children:

Step 1 – Find the right time

Sitting down to work out a child maintenance arrangement might seem a bit of a daunting task. But the quicker you can work out an arrangement, the clearer your child's future will seem and the more secure you'll feel.

Step 2 – Work out what your child needs

The next step is to work out what your child needs, and how much this will cost. All children need clothes, food, and a roof over their heads. You might also need to think about child care costs or other costs dependent upon the age of your child.

Step 3 – Decide how you will share the cost

How you share the cost of raising your child is for you and your ex-partner to decide. For example, you might agree to 'split the difference', or vary it according to how much money you each earn.

Step 4 – Write it down

This way you'll both have a record of what's been agreed, and will have made a joint commitment to sticking to it.

Step 5 – Do it and review it

Some parents decide to review their family-based arrangement every year, or when children reach milestones like birthdays or a change in schools.

Our website, www.cmoptions.org, contains a wealth of information about family-based arrangements, other ways of arranging child maintenance, as well as a library of tools, leaflets and information to help parents to calculate and talk about child maintenance, record a family-based arrangement and manage their finances.

To speak to someone at Child Maintenance Options call 0800 988 0988.

Media enquiries for this press release – 0203 267 5111

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