

UK leads the way on ending plastic pollution

The Environment Secretary has today started talks with businesses, environmental groups, scientists and civil society on shaping a legally-binding global treaty that aims to end plastic pollution by 2040.

Plastic pollution is one of the greatest global environmental challenges we currently face and it is predicted that unless action is taken there will be a threefold increase in the amount of plastic flowing into the ocean between 2016 and 2040.

In partnership with the Ocean Plastics Leadership Network – an organisation comprised of industry, scientists and activists – the UK Government is running a series of dialogue meetings, which will be key in strengthening the UK's leading voice at the treaty negotiations.

At the first meeting, stakeholders including Tesco, Sainsburys, Coca Cola, Nestle, H&M and Greenpeace came together to provide their views on how UK businesses can contribute towards bringing an end to plastic pollution, and inform the UK's negotiating position for a far-reaching treaty.

The international treaty will set obligations on countries to reduce pollution across the whole plastics lifecycle – from production and consumption to disposal and waste management. The first formal negotiations will take place on 28 November to 2 December 2022 in Uruguay and will be facilitated by the United Nations Environment Programme.

Environment Secretary Thérèse Coffey said:

“Plastic pollution has a direct and deadly effect on our wildlife, polluting our ocean and damaging our planet.

“Our laws are already helping to cut waste domestically, and international action is needed to end plastic pollution by 2040.

“Today's meeting was important in bringing together government, business and environmental organisations on this issue – it's vital for us all to work together if we are to make progress in tackling plastic pollution globally.”

Dave Ford, Founder, Ocean Plastics Leadership Network said:

“We are honoured to collaborate with the UK Government on the UK Plastics Treaty Dialogues.

“Our objective with the series is to build knowledge and understanding of the UN Global Treaty process and various solutions, to help unite the myriad of stakeholders in working together in efforts to solve the plastics crisis.

“We aim to expand this effort to 20 countries worldwide.”

Current commitments around the world will only reduce the annual discharge of plastic into the ocean by 7% by 2040, according to the [Breaking the Plastic Wave report](#) published by the Pew Charitable Trusts. The only way to achieve a significant reduction in the flow of plastic into the environment is by taking action across the whole lifecycle of plastic, reducing our consumption of plastic, re-using plastic products and improving waste management systems.

The UK has been a leading voice in attempts to tackle marine plastic pollution, [co-sponsoring the proposal to prepare a new treaty](#) and being a founding member of the High Ambition Coalition to End Plastic Pollution, a group of more than 30 countries calling for a target under the treaty to stop plastic from flowing into our lands and ocean by 2040.

This builds on the UK's world-leading efforts to tackle plastic pollution at home. We have so far introduced a plastic packaging tax on packaging that contains less than 30% recycled plastic, a ban on microbeads in rinse-off personal care products, and measures to restrict the supply of plastic straws, plastic drink stirrers and plastic-stemmed cotton buds.

Our carrier bag charge has reduced the use of single-use carrier bags in the main supermarkets by over 95%. We plan to go even further through our Environment Act, which enables us to change the way we manage our waste. Through the introduction of extended producer responsibility for packaging, we will ensure producers cover the costs of collecting and managing plastic waste.

The Environment Act also gives us powers to introduce deposit return schemes, establish greater consistency in the recycling system, better control the export of plastic waste and introduce charges for single-use items.

[The impact of parenting on children's outcomes](#)

Parents and carers serve as children's first educators and teachers. This is something most people can agree on, yet offering parents advice on how they can best perform these important roles is something of a taboo. Home and family life is rightly private and pushing tired, stretched parents to do more and more can come across as patronising, 'parent-shaming' or simply tone deaf in today's difficult economic climate.

Yet, getting parenting right has the potential to shape a child's growth, development and life course for the better, irrespective of socioeconomic background or circumstance. More recently, government agencies, charities, schools and even private companies have clocked the holistic benefits of parent-child interactions and various campaigns have emerged on the topic such as the BBC's [Tiny Happy People](#) and the NHS' [Start for Life](#).

As the conversation around parenting gets louder, some are calling for further action. Lee Elliot Major, Professor of Social Mobility at Exeter University, says in the first episode of our Social Mobility Talks podcast: “There are too many parents who are not given the information of what you can do to help your children”.

At the Social Mobility Commission, we have looked into the activities parents can do with their children to support their child’s development. This work has shown that the early years are an essential window to act, as the experiences a child has in their first 5 years provide the building blocks for their life.

In these early years, there is great opportunity, but also great risk, as children that get ahead tend to stay ahead whilst those that fall behind struggle to catch up. To bring this home, on average, the poorest children start school 4.5 months behind all others and leave school at age 18 a staggering 18.1 months of learning behind their more advantaged peers (Education Policy Institute, Annual Report, 2020).

What parents can do

Simple interactions between a parent and child can be learning moments for children in their early years, in ways likely more significant than at any other period in the child’s life. Therefore, giving a child a leg up can be as simple as talking, playing and reading with them. Regardless of whether a child has the ability or vocabulary to respond, engaging in reciprocal communication can develop their cognitive and language skills and using an array of words is one of the strongest predictors of children’s early language development.

In terms of play, ‘guided play’ – where a parent joins in a playful activity with their child – can lead to improvements in a child’s understanding and retention of things like shapes and names compared with those who play alone. Learning through play also contributes to all kinds of healthy development features such as planning, self-regulation and mental flexibility.

For educational attainment reading is a big ticket item, but, as drawn out in our podcast episode on parenting, reading only reaches its potential impact if it is consistent – at least 3 times a week for 15 minutes. Reading with a child has been shown to improve their socio-emotional skills as well as literacy and numeracy and it is linked with lifelong benefits for cognition, vocabulary and pattern construction.

As often said, it takes a village to raise a child, and therefore every adult that’s around in a child’s early years has the potential to engage with them in productive interactions that can seed countless lasting benefits.

How we can help parents

To avoid shaming, patronising, nannying or burdening parents who are already

trying to do the best for their children, policy makers, the health services and government departments need to find ways to offer empathetic but proactive guidance, confidence and support.

Parents need to be made aware that talking to their baby is beneficial, even if they are too young to respond – and assured that reading does not have to mean long complicated books but can be any words they see around them.

Research also shows that lack of confidence plays a key role in why parents do or do not engage with their children. For parents in general, but particularly those that might not have experienced this style of parenting themselves, wavering belief in their own abilities and skills may contribute to stress, anxiety and unhappiness which can itself act as a barrier to supporting their child's learning.

We therefore need to translate these findings into constructive action which fills the gaps in parents' knowledge and empowers them with the tools and confidence to interact more effectively with their children. We need to do this while recognising that parents operate within a wider environment, juggling raising their children with other challenges – such as getting food on the table, working long hours, keeping up with rising energy bills and finding secure housing.

The SMC will therefore be looking to increase parents' understanding of how they can nurture their children's talent in the early years whilst at the same time, considering how other factors, like improving education, growing the economy and creating more opportunities for more people in more places are so crucial. To succeed, we need to provide parents knowledge along with the time, resources and a favourable environment to act on it.

To shape our thinking, we will explore the impact of government-led initiatives that have targeted families to understand 'what works' in terms of enabling every child to fulfil their potential.

To listen to our podcast on the topic of parenting, a conversation between our Chair, Katharine Birbalsingh and Lee Elliot Major, Professor of Social Mobility at the University of Exeter, follow one of the links below:

[Privy Council appointments: 1 November 2022](#)

Press release

The King has approved the following new appointments to His Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council



The King has been pleased to approve that Rachel Reeves MP and Baron Kennedy of Southwark be sworn of His Majesty's most Honourable Privy Council.

Published 1 November 2022

[Welsh Secretary celebrates 40 years of S4C](#)

News story

The broadcaster has been a pillar for Wales and the Welsh language for the last four decades



Secretary of State David TC Davies has congratulated broadcaster S4C on its 40th anniversary.

Since 1982 S4C has entertained and served viewers throughout Wales and beyond. The channel celebrated its 40th birthday on 1 November.

The UK government continues to support S4C. Earlier this year the channel secured an improved funding deal which included £7.5m in new money each year to support its digital services.

Secretary of State for Wales David TC Davies said:

Congratulations to S4C on 40 years of broadcasting. The channel has educated and entertained generations of audiences and plays a crucial role in the creative industries in Wales.

As a government we continue to support S4C so it can create and broadcast the highest-quality content to audiences in Wales and across the world.

Published 1 November 2022

[Merseyrail to manage fines using the Single Justice Procedure](#)

Anyone responding to a Single Justice Procedure (SJP) notice from Merseyrail, for an offence such as travelling without a valid ticket, can now enter their plea online.

If the defendant pleads guilty, their case can be managed without a court hearing. These cases are managed using Common Platform, our criminal case management system which supports SJP. This means defendants' cases can be resolved quickly, fairly and more efficiently.

As with all SJP cases, defendants can still choose to have their case heard in a court. They can also submit a plea on paper, rather than electronically.

Each Merseyrail case will be considered in the same way and the same penalties apply.

The rail provider is the first outside London to use Common Platform for prosecuting cases online.

Benefits to Merseyrail operations

Suzanne Grant, Commercial Director at Merseyrail, said:

I'm really pleased that we're the first regional train provider to use Common Platform to progress these types of cases.

Whilst the majority of passengers travelling on our network purchase a ticket, this new platform will allow us to deal with the small number that fail to do so promptly and efficiently.

It will benefit both Merseyrail and our customers. For our staff, it means less paperwork. For our customers, they'll be able to make a plea online and have their case resolved far more speedily, rather than it hanging over them for a month or more.

Working with HMCTS, we've rigorously trialled the new system, which delivered greater efficiencies and faster processes all round, so we're confident it'll be a huge asset to how we operate.

About the SJP

The SJP is part of the [Single Justice Service](#). This service supports magistrates' courts to deal with minor offences more efficiently, while still ensuring rigorous, open and fair justice.

A single magistrate, supported by a legal adviser, can decide adult, minor, non-imprisonable and victimless offences, such as fare evasion. People who plead guilty can resolve their case without going to court. This minimises delays and allows more court time for other cases.

It's already used to process SJP cases for other non-police prosecutors, including:

- Transport for London
- TV Licensing
- Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency

Future plans

We're planning to onboard more non-police prosecutors on to Common Platform.

More information

[Find out more about Common Platform](#), the case management system supporting SJP.