

Separated migrant children given better access to legal aid

- legislation will increase access to justice for vulnerable group
- move welcomed by children's charities

Vulnerable migrant children who have been separated from their parents will get quicker and simpler access to legal aid, after new government legislation came into force today (25 October 2019).

The Legal Aid for Separated Children Order 2019 will bring non-asylum immigration and citizenship matters into the scope of legal aid for under 18s who are not in the care of a parent, guardian or legal authority.

Previously, vulnerable children making such applications to remain in the UK could only apply for legal aid through the Exceptional Case Funding (ECF) scheme.

Justice Minister Wendy Morton MP said:

This is a positive step to make sure we are offering the right support and protection to some of the most vulnerable in our society.

These changes will mean migrant children who have been separated from their carers can access the vital legal support they need faster and more easily.

The Ministry of Justice has worked with The Children's Society and other children's charities on the amendment and will continue to do so as it comes into force.

Mark Russell, CEO the Children's Society, said:

We are delighted the government has acted on their promise to ensure separated and unaccompanied children can resolve immigration issues and secure their citizenship, without the stress of applying for exceptional case funding, or trying to navigate complex human rights law all alone.

We look forward to working closely with the Ministry of Justice to ensure that affected children and the professionals supporting them know about this vital change.

The amendment is in addition to publication of the department's Legal Support Action Plan earlier this year. This committed to improving the Exceptional

Case Funding scheme, along with a series of pilots to test the most effective forms of early legal support.

Reviews have also begun into the legal aid means test to ensure accessibility into the future, along with the entire criminal legal aid system through the Criminal Legal Aid Review.

Notes to editors

- Under current legislation, legal aid is available in all asylum cases – for all age groups – and immigration cases where someone is challenging a detention decision. For immigration matters not in the scope of legal aid, funding may be available via the Exceptional Case Funding scheme, if the relevant eligibility criteria are met and there is a breach or risk of a breach of ECHR rights or enforceable EU law.
- Following litigation from The Children’s Society, a Written Ministerial Statement was made in July 2018 by former Justice Minister Lucy Frazer MP detailing the government’s commitment to amend the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 to bring immigration matters for unaccompanied and separated children into scope of legal aid. A Statutory Instrument was laid in July and has since been approved by both the House of Commons and House of Lords.
- This amendment brings non-asylum immigration and citizenship matters into the scope of legal aid for under 18s who are not in the care of a parent, guardian or legal authority including legal aid for applications to the EU Settlement Scheme.- Legislation will increase access to justice for vulnerable group

People in 100 places across England urged to shape Town Deals in new #MyTown campaign

- Communities encouraged to share pride in their town and ideas for Town Deals worth up to £25 million
- Government’s £3.6 billion Towns Fund will support innovative regeneration plans
- Town deals at heart of the Prime Minister’s commitment to levelling up our regions

People in 100 places across England have the chance to write the next chapter for their towns thanks to a new campaign launched by Communities and Local Government Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP.

The #MyTown campaign gives people a say in how a new generation of Town

Deals, each worth up to £25 million, should transform the place they call home.

It also provides a platform for communities to share their proud history and ambitions for a bright future.

People will be able to share their views on a new dedicated Facebook page and on Twitter through #MyTown.

The campaign builds on the government's announcement of 100 places from Camborne to Cleator Moor chosen to pioneer multi-million Town Deals as part of the £3.6 billion Towns Fund.

Communities and Local Government Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

Too many towns feel neglected by Westminster politicians. This government is committed to levelling up all parts of the country.

That's why we're investing up to £25 million in 100 towns across the country. And I want local people to determine how that money is spent.

Minister for the Northern Powerhouse and Local Growth Rt Hon Jake Berry MP said:

We are going further than any government before to level up every corner of our country.

With our new £3.6 billion Towns Fund, we're ramping up efforts to give local people power and money to decide what is best for their town.

Wherever you live, getting involved in the My Town campaign is your chance to decide where this major investment should go.

A total of 45 places across the Northern Powerhouse and 30 places across the Midlands Engine are among the 100 places invited to develop ambitious plans to transform towns across England as part of the government's commitment to level up all regions.

Communities, businesses and local leaders will now join forces to draw up ambitious plans to transform their town's economic growth prospects with a focus on improved transport, broadband connectivity, skills and culture.

Details support and guidance to the 100 places to kick-start the process for preparing for a Town Deal will be announced shortly.

In due course the government will also announce details of a competition for further towns beyond the initial 100 to develop plans for their own Town Deals.

Visit [Facebook.com/mytowncampaign](https://www.facebook.com/mytowncampaign)

See the [100 places being supported to develop Town Deals](#) (PDF, 892KB, 2 pages) .

On 27 July 2019 the Prime Minister announced that the £3.6 billion Towns Fund would support an initial 100 town deals across England. See further details of the [announcement](#).

As part of the Spending Round the Chancellor announced £241 million of the Towns Fund is available to support places in 2020 to 2021.

The government wants to make sure that all parts of the UK can benefit from resources to boost productivity and living standards. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is in ongoing discussions with colleagues across HMG about how we can better support our towns in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and make sure areas throughout the UK share in the opportunities of Brexit.

[The Climate Emergency: "...this year the answers are different."](#)

Thank you for inviting me to give this lecture. It's an honour and a privilege to be here at the Royal Holloway.

I was once told by a distinguished diplomat that to understand any big issue you need to know only two things: history and the map. So when I got this invitation I studied both. The map was easy – I live not too far away. And the history of the Royal Holloway was inspiring.

I'm struck by how forward-looking were the founders of this institution.

Forward-looking about women, because the two colleges which formed the Royal Holloway were among the first places in Britain where women could access higher education. I've spent a lot of my life living and working in developing countries. And while there is debate about precisely what interventions work best to fight poverty and promote sustainable development, there is overwhelming evidence that the most powerful thing you can do can be summed up in just two words – educate girls.

Forward-looking about black rights, because Sarah Parker Remond, one of the first students here, was the first black woman to undertake a round Britain lecture tour to tackle slavery.

Forward-looking about mental health, because your founder Thomas Holloway's first venture was to build a sanatorium in east London to support people with

mental health problems.

I was also struck by how forward-looking your Geography Department is, and how focused on the climate emergency. Examples:

- The recently published study on Human Health in an Era of Global Environmental Change by your Dr Jennifer Cole, which explores the idea that the health of the environment and the health of humans is inextricably linked. There's a message there for the Treasury in how best to spend money on health – putting some of it into creating a better environment is likely to give you a greater return on investment than putting all of it into the NHS.
- A new briefing, co-authored by your Dr Bethan Davies, which warns that if we fail to restrict global temperature increase to 1.5°C by the end of the century, the Antarctic will experience irreversible and dramatic change. As we know, that isn't just bad news for the penguins: it's bad news for the planet.

I learnt two other things while I was preparing for this lecture. First, how successful the geography department is: a score of 96% for overall student satisfaction in the national league tables is hugely impressive. And coming first in the UK league table for satisfaction with teaching in the latest Guardian University Guide is even better, and a huge tribute to Professor Crang and the whole faculty here.

Second, I now know who Gordon Manley was, in whose name this lecture is given. I now know that he was a British climatologist who was Professor of Geography at Bedford College which subsequently became part of Royal Holloway. And I know that his life's work was compiling the Central England monthly temperature series which runs all the way back to 1659 – the longest instrumental record for any location anywhere in the world. And that matters: that record is news we can use, because it allows us to understand whether, how and why the climate is changing.

All that means, I think, that I am in the right place to talk about the future and about climate. And I'd like to think that I am the right person from the right organisation to do that. For those of you who don't know the Environment Agency, the clue is in the name. We are Europe's biggest environmental protection organisation. Our purpose is simple: to create a better place, for people and wildlife. We have 10,000 people up and down the country who do just that.

We protect the environment by regulating the industries – waste, energy, farming etc – that could damage it. We work to ensure that our water, soil and air stays clean and the life that depends on them is not harmed. When pollution happens, we respond to limit the damage and clean up the mess – and in serious cases we take action against those who have caused it.

We enhance the environment, by planting trees, restoring rivers to their original natural state, and working with others to create new and better habitats.

We protect people from flooding, by building and operating flood defences on our rivers and coasts, by warning and informing communities when floods threaten and by coming to their aid when they happen.

And we create better places, by working with planners to design and build cities which are life-enhancing to live in, with the blue and green spaces people want and the sustainable infrastructure we all need for the future. And we are working particular to create the kind of places and the kind of country we will need to cope with what is by far the biggest challenge of our time: the climate emergency.

The climate emergency: what's happening

I won't presume to lecture you about the fact or the causes of climate change: most of you will understand it better than me.

I will just say this: that the rise in global temperature over the last several decades is a matter of public record; that there is an overwhelming scientific consensus that it can only be explained by one thing – the rise in greenhouse gas emissions caused by human activities; that this is having precisely the effect the science predicts, which is a rise in global temperatures; and that this in turn is causing more extreme weather and rising sea levels.

Not only is global warming happening, it may be speeding up. The 20 warmest years on record have all come since 1995. The five warmest years have all been in this decade, the 2010s. 2016 was the hottest year since records began. 2018 saw the joint hottest summer on record in the UK.

The climate emergency: what we're seeing now

So we all know the general climate issue. But let me bring it to life a bit by telling you what my teams in the Environment Agency are now seeing on the ground.

We are seeing more extreme rainfall and more extreme flooding. In 2015 a gauge at Honister Pass in Cumbria recorded 341mm of rain in 24 hours, a new record: that rain caused some of the worst flooding in living memory.

In 2017 there were flash floods at the Cornish coastal village of Coverack. They were caused by an extreme rainfall event which set a new UK record for 3-hour rainfall intensity.

We are seeing more extreme heat. Last summer's prolonged dry weather caused local droughts, environmental damage, fires, pollution, and the death of wildlife. Our teams responded to three times the normal number of pollution incidents – including by going out and rescuing fish that were in distress because of low water or oxygen levels. And despite a lot of recent rain, if we have a third dry winter now then next year we will be facing water shortages in the South East.

We are seeing rising sea levels. The Thames Barrier, a few miles downstream

from where we are now, which we own and operate, protects London against flooding from high tides. It has that predicted sea level rise designed in, and will be sufficient until around 2070. But we are already planning its successor, which will have to cope with the significantly higher tides and sea levels we know will happen as a result of climate change.

We are seeing impacts on national infrastructure as it comes under greater pressure from climate change. A few weeks ago Toddbrook Reservoir in Whaley Bridge nearly failed after heavy rainfall. A disaster was narrowly averted – and the Environment Agency was at the heart of that operation. But like Toddbrook, much of our infrastructure is Victorian: it's aging and it wasn't designed for the more extreme weather climate change is causing. That is bringing greater and greater risks.

The climate emergency: what will happen if we don't tackle it

The science also tells us what will happen if we don't tackle the climate emergency. There will be:

- more frequent and more extreme flooding and coastal erosion, caused by wetter winters, heavier rain, stronger storms and rising sea levels. That threatens all of us, because floods destroy: lives, livelihoods, communities.
- more water shortages and higher drought risk, caused by the hotter drier summers and less predictable rainfall. That would do deep damage to our economy and our environment.
- more frequent and more extreme fires and wildfires, such as we saw in the UK and around the world last summer, often with terrible cost to humans and wildlife.
- more air and water pollution, due to those longer, hotter summers. That will threaten plants and animals, our wider environment and our own health.
- more damage to wildlife and the habitat on which it depends. In many cases that damage may be existential. If we continue to emit greenhouse gases at the same rate as today, then by 2050 one million species across the globe are likely to vanish.

The climate emergency will damage something else too: human rights. Because climate change is not just an environmental challenge. It's also a human rights issue. It directly threatens people's economic and social rights – to life, water, food etc. And it threatens their civil and political rights, because diminishing access to water can cause conflict, for example.

Worse, climate change exacerbates inequalities and does most damage to the rights of the most vulnerable – women, the poor, those in developing countries – because they have the least capacity to adapt to its consequences. They are also the people who bear least responsibility for causing the problem in the first place. So the fight against climate change is also a fight for climate justice.

What we need to do about it

So we know the problem. We also know the basic solution.

We need to mitigate the damage from climate change, by reducing or stopping the human activities which are causing it. We can do that in particular by cutting our emissions of greenhouse gases.

And we need to adapt to the changing climate, so that the planet is resilient to its effects, for example by designing infrastructure that can cope with the more extreme weather we know is coming.

And at its most basic, we need to live differently. We need to reduce, replace or stop the human activities that are driving climate change.

All that is everyone's problem, and everyone needs to contribute to the solution.

What the EA is doing

The Environment Agency is stepping up what we do ourselves. We have now made tackling the climate emergency our top priority.

We are working actively with those we regulate – industry, farmers, the energy sector – to ensure they reduce or eliminate their greenhouse gas emissions.

We have a statutory role in planning decisions. So we are working with local authorities, planners and developers to create better places, designed for the climate we now anticipate.

We are working with the water companies to manage the risks and short term consequences of drought, and to ensure that the country will have better water security in the long term.

As we build new flood defences up and down the country, we are ensuring that they are explicitly designed for greater climate resilience.

And in the face of the climate emergency we are producing a new national strategy to manage the risk of flood and coastal erosion between now and 2100.

Our strategy will say that the climate emergency is a game changer. We can no longer plan for a maximum temperature rise of 2° by 2100 but for a possible rise of 4°, and the even more violent weather and higher seas that will mean.

It will also say that we need a new response to this. We need to move from a narrow concept of protection (essentially building walls round things to stop water getting at them) to a broader one of resilience. That will still include building flood defences to protect communities. But we will need increasingly to focus on strengthening their ability to cope with flooding and coastal change when it does happen, and on building back better

afterwards, rather than just recreating what was there before. And where communities are cannot be defended in the long term we will need to move them.

Gandhi said: “be the change you want to see in the world”. And we in the Environment Agency do think that as an organisation we need to walk the walk in how we operate ourselves.

That is why earlier this month the Environment Agency announced that we will set ourselves the goal of becoming a net zero organisation by 2030. That means that by then we will be taking as much carbon out of the atmosphere as we are putting into it, so that we are no longer contributing to climate change ourselves.

This is going to be very difficult. Much of what we do, like building flood defences, pumping water, and moving goods and vehicles around the country, puts out a lot of carbon. We will need to find different ways to do those things that don't contribute to the climate emergency. We don't yet have all the answers. So net zero by 2030 is already a very tough challenge.

So we have done the obvious thing, and decided to make it even harder for ourselves. We have done that by setting an even more ambitious aspiration for 2050: we will explore whether we can become, by then, an absolute zero organisation – one that does not produce any carbon at all. We know of no other major organisation that has done that – and there may well be a reason why. But we think it is right to challenge ourselves.

As President Kennedy said when he announced that the US would seek to put a man on the Moon even before NASA had any idea how to do that, we choose to do these things not because they are easy, but because they are hard.

What the government is doing/should do

The government has a big role in tackling the climate emergency.

The 25 Year Environment Plan launched last year is an important step forward. It commits the government to take all possible action to mitigate climate change, including by continuing to cut greenhouse gas emissions; to adapt to reduce its impact; and to ensure that all government policies and investment decisions take it into account. And the new environmental watchdog announced in the Environment Bill will have a role in holding this government and future governments to account on their climate performance.

Perhaps even more significant is the example that government and Parliament have set by adopting the target of making the UK as a whole net zero by 2050. In June the UK became the first major economy in the world to pass laws to end its contribution to global warming by that date. That builds on the foresight and cross-party support that gave us the world-leading Climate Change Act, the basis for the UK's approach to climate change, which required that emissions of greenhouse gases are reduced and that climate change risks are prepared for.

And the government has another great opportunity to show global leadership when the UK hosts the next UN Summit on climate change next year.

What business can/should do

Business has a critical role to play too. Each business will either be part of the problem or part of the solution. The key to ensuring that most businesses are in the second category is to re-frame the issue: to recognise that tackling the climate emergency properly will not impose unacceptable costs on business but will actually save money and generate new growth. This climate emergency is also a huge investment opportunity, in particular in those sectors which are the backbone of the economy such as housing, transport, retail, utilities and industry.

And I do think business increasingly gets it. The insurance companies are pricing climate change into their policies and looking to help their customers become more resilient to its effects, not least because that can cut insurance payouts when things like flooding happen. The water companies, energy companies, retail sector and others are recognising the business sense in investing in their businesses now to ensure resilience later. As the Chief Executive of a large water company said to me recently: if I don't have water, I don't have a business.

And forward-thinking companies are factoring climate into their operations to beneficial effect. Example: the Thames Tideway Tunnel, currently being built for Thames Water.

The Tideway is a new 25km sewer that will run from west to east London under the River Thames. It will address the problem of overflow from London's Victorian sewers, which currently dump sewage into the Thames after high rainfall. When the Tideway is completed, those sewage overflow discharges will instead be stored and treated properly. The Tideway is one of the biggest infrastructure schemes in the country. It will also bring the biggest single change to the quality of the Thames in generations. The Environment Agency is working closely with the company to ensure we get it right.

Last week I went down the Tideway Tunnel, now well under construction. Tackling the climate emergency is designed into the project. It will increase London's resilience to the higher rainfall that will result from global warming. It is a low carbon design: 95% of the carbon emitted in the project's 120 year life will come from the construction – it uses low carbon concrete, and the parts are designed to last for 120 years so there will be no need for (carbon heavy) replacement. It uses low carbon transport: most of the project's supplies come in and most of the spoil goes out by barge rather than by truck. And it creates new green spaces which will act as carbon sinks.

What you can do

So as we confront the biggest challenge of our time, there's a role for the Environment Agency, for government, and for businesses.

And I'm here tonight to tell you that there is also a role for you.

There's a role for you as students or academics. As they say in Silicon Valley, the best way to predict the future is to invent it. We don't yet have all the answers about climate change and how to tackle it. We may not even yet be asking all the right questions. We need the best evidence, the best analysis, the best predictions, the best new ideas – that's what institutions like this, and students and faculty like you, can offer.

For the students here tonight, there's a role for you in whatever future career you take up. Whether you go into professional geography, wider academic research, finance, construction, IT, politics, health care, planning, the law, the creative sector, tech startup, services, food and farming, or all those new jobs that haven't been invented yet, what you do and don't do will make a difference to whether we can or can't live sustainably and tackle the climate emergency successfully.

And if you don't fancy any of these career options, you can always consider joining us in the Environment Agency. We are always on the lookout for talent. There is a lot of it sitting in front of me right now. If we are to tackle the climate emergency and create the better place we want this world to be in future, we need your energy, commitment, insight and readiness to think different.

I quoted President Kennedy on why he launched the Apollo programme. When he came to power sixty years ago, the space programme was the new frontier. Today the new frontier is not leaving Earth but saving it. I'd like to invite all of you to consider doing that with the Environment Agency.

And finally, whatever you do in your future careers, there a role for all of us as humans now.

The Environment Agency's offices in London were recently surrounded by protesters from Extinction Rebellion. I support most of their aims even if I disagree with some of their methods. Last week I saw an XR poster I hadn't seen before. It said: "The biggest threat to the planet is the belief that someone else will save it".

And on that XR are unarguably right. If we are really to win the fight against climate change we all need to change how we behave. We need to live differently: so please have less stuff, share what you have, consume less, reuse more. We need to travel differently: so please walk, cycle or use public transport wherever you can, and reduce your car use and flights. We need to eat differently: that means less and better meat and dairy. We need to use less energy: so turn your heating down, insulate your home, switch things off. Most of all, we need to influence others: so please encourage your family, friends and colleagues to make a change too.

Conclusion

Since this is a scientific institution, let me close by quoting the most famous scientist of all, Albert Einstein. As a Professor he set his students

annual exams, and one year as Einstein was distributing the exam papers a clever student noticed something. He put his hand up and said: "But Professor Einstein, these questions are the same as we had last year". And Einstein replied: "Yes. The questions are the same. But this year the answers are different".

We know most of the questions we have to address to tackle the climate emergency. And we already know some of the answers. But some answers we don't yet know, and some of the answers we have today will be different in future. All of you, and all great institutions like the Royal Holloway, can play a role in delivering those answers. Please do. There will be no greater gift to science, or to this planet.

[75,000 telemarketing calls land solar panel directors with bans](#)

Solartech North East Ltd was incorporated in July 2010 with Christopher Snaith (51), from Stockton-on-Tees, appointed as director. He was followed by Jeffrey Allan Hall (40), also from Stockton-on-Tees, who was appointed in February 2012.

The company originally operated as a renewable energy company, selling and installing high-quality solar panels to the domestic market in the UK.

Initially, the company was successful but due to legislative changes in 2016, it became less cost-effective for the homeowner to install solar panels.

This impacted on Solartech North East's success and in response, they diversified into installing boilers and other home improvement services before succumbing to economic pressures and entering into Creditors Voluntary Liquidation in February 2019.

The liquidation triggered an Insolvency Service investigation into the company's activities.

During 2017, Solartech North East had been investigated by Trading Standards and the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) following complaints made by customers and other individuals.

Investigations by the ICO found that between 1 January 2017 and 30 June 2017, Solartech North East made 74,902 unsolicited calls for direct marketing purposes to subscribers whose numbers were registered with the [Telephone Preference Service](#).

The ICO issued Solartech with a £90,000 fine for serious breaches of the [Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations](#), which remained outstanding

as of the date of liquidation in February 2019.

On 4 September 2019 the Secretary of State accepted disqualification undertakings from Christopher Snaith and Jeffrey Hall after they did not dispute that they had failed to ensure that Solartech North East complied with Regulation 21 of the Privacy and Electronic Communications (EC Directive) Regulations 2003.

Effective from 25 September 2019, the pair cannot, without the permission of the court, be involved in the formation, promotion or management of a company, directly or indirectly, for 6-years.

Jane Knight, Deputy Head of Insolvent Investigations from the Insolvency Service, said:

Making tens of thousands of unsolicited marketing calls to people who had specifically opted out from receiving them is unacceptable trading practice.

The disqualifications mean Christopher Snaith and Jeffrey Hall will not be able to run a limited company for 6 years and will protect the public from unwanted sales calls.

David Clancy, ICO Enforcement Group Manager, said:

By partnering with the Insolvency Service in cases like this we are disrupting the ruthless operations of directors of companies plaguing the public with illegal nuisance calls.

Christopher Snaith is of Stockton-on-Tees and his date of birth is April 1968

Jeffrey Hall is of Stockton-on-Tees and his date of birth is June 1979.

Solartech North East Ltd (Company no. 07327707).

Disqualification undertakings are the administrative equivalent of a disqualification order but do not involve court proceedings. Persons subject to a disqualification order are bound by a [range of restrictions](#).

[Further information about the work of the Insolvency Service, and how to complain about financial misconduct](#).

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on:

International Freedom of Religion or Belief Day: Simon Collis' message

Tomorrow is International Freedom of Religion or Belief Day.

Over the last 5 years, I have had the honour to serve as HM's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, a country which is the home to two of the holiest sites of pilgrimage in Islam.

Every year Saudi Arabia welcomes millions of pilgrims who visit the Kingdom to perform Hajj and Umrah. Of these, over 125,000 are British nationals.

Islam, together with other religions, is part of what defines the fabric of modern Britain, and its rich tapestry of faiths and beliefs. In the UK, there are 73 denominations of Islam, and over 3000 mosques. Diversity is a strength, and part of our national identity.

Lord Ahmad, the FC0 Minister for Human Rights, recently visited Saudi Arabia and talked about Freedom of Religion and Belief with his counterparts from the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the MFA, and the Human Rights Commission.

Islam is a religion that teaches harmony, tolerance and diversity. Peace and tolerance are values that King Salman, The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques highlighted in his speech at the end of Ramadan. From my 5 years here, I can say that Eid in Saudi Arabia is a great occasion for harmony, solidarity, tolerance and happiness.

The Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has also emphasised the values of coexistence, moderation and tolerance. During his visit to the UK last year the Crown Prince met with the Archbishop of Canterbury and emphasised his commitment to promote the flourishing of different faith traditions and interfaith dialogue in Saudi Arabia.

International Freedom of Religion or Belief Day is a reminder to all of us to promote coexistence and respect between people of different cultures and religions. International Freedom of Religion or Belief Day is a reminder to all of us to promote coexistence and respect between people of different cultures and religions. We make this effort not just because the right to freedom of religion or belief is a principle worth defending but also because we believe that societies in which people are free to practice their faith or belief are, by their very nature, more stable and more prosperous.