

News story: Government publishes details of immigration advisory groups

The Home Office has today (Monday 17 June) published [membership details](#) of 5 advisory groups, established to deepen engagement between government and industry as the future skills-based immigration system is developed.

The department is undertaking a year-long engagement programme to hear the views of communities and gather expertise from businesses across the UK.

Over 100 events have been held since the start of the year, reaching almost 1,500 stakeholders.

Immigration Minister Caroline Nokes said:

I've already met hundreds of people and businesses to make sure our future immigration system works for every part of the UK.

Our advisory groups will provide invaluable expertise and representing the views of businesses, employers and vulnerable people.

We are delivering on the referendum result by ending free movement and establishing a system to designed to attract talent to the UK, not based on where people are from.

Matthew Fell, CBI Chief UK Policy Director, said:

As we leave the EU, getting the new immigration system right is a high priority for businesses.

Employers have welcomed this opportunity to provide extra evidence to the Home Office, to help design an immigration system which both restores public confidence and meets the needs of our economy.

These sessions have been frank and constructive, and we hope the detailed feedback provided is reflected in final details of the new system.

The 5 groups are:

- Employers' Advisory Group – consisting of groups representing major employers across the UK
- Education Sector Advisory Group – made up of groups representing

universities and colleges

- Crossing the Border Advisory Group – composed of organisations representing the aviation, maritime and rail sectors
- National Advisory Group – consisting of groups representing organisations from England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales
- Vulnerability Advisory Group – made up of organisations representing vulnerable individuals

The new immigration and borders system will be implemented in a phased approach from 2021.

Proposals include scrapping the annual cap on the number of visas issued for skilled workers and widening the skills threshold to include people with qualifications equivalent of A levels.

The new skills-based system will also remove the resident labour market test for high-skilled workers and introduce a route for temporary workers at any skills from low-risk countries, allowing them to come to the UK for a maximum of 12 months.

Full details are available in the government's [White Paper](#).

Press release: Over five million Afghans to receive emergency life-saving UK aid

A significant new UK aid package of urgent food, water and medical help, including polio vaccinations for children, will save millions of lives in Afghanistan, International Development Secretary Rory Stewart announced today (Monday, 17 June).

An estimated 13.5 million Afghans are in need of humanitarian aid to make sure there is enough food for themselves and their families.

Mr Stewart announced the UK aid package during a visit of the President of Afghanistan Ashraf Ghani to London. President Ghani also met with Prime Minister Theresa May.

International Development Secretary Rory Stewart, who met President Ghani

this morning, said:

The humanitarian need in Afghanistan is severe. Fighting and extreme drought have left millions of people hungry and desperately seeking medical help, which is why UK aid is responding with life-saving food, water and basic healthcare, including polio vaccinations.

This UK aid package is a significant contribution to the international response in Afghanistan. We are working closely with the Afghan government in response to increasing needs. But the UK cannot tackle this crisis alone, and other donors must now step up and follow our lead.

In addition to the UK aid package of life-saving assistance including food, water, and healthcare for over five million people, the UK Department for International Development's (DFID) emergency humanitarian support will:

- help over 400,000 people to have appointments with doctors or nurses
- vaccinate over 140,000 children under the age of five against polio
- provide support and training for individuals and families to protect themselves from climate shocks and conflict

The UK aid funding will support the UN's Pooled Fund for Afghanistan for humanitarian emergencies, help Afghans deal with the impact of conflict through providing prosthetics and orthotics for over 50,000 people with disabilities, and will aim to build the capacity of Afghan NGOs to take a greater role in the response.

In addition to meeting the needs of Afghans who have been displaced to other parts of the country, the UK aid support will target over a quarter of a million Afghans who have returned from neighbouring countries and who are in urgent need of assistance.

Notes to editors

- Today's funding of £170 million, will provide humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan over five years. This will be delivered through a mix of partners from the UN, international NGOs, and Afghan NGOs.

[News story: RAF Typhoons scramble to intercept Russian fighters as part of](#)

Baltic Air Policing Mission

This weekend's activity means that RAF jets operating from Ämari Air Base in Estonia have made eight intercepts of Russian aircraft since taking over the Baltic Air Policing mission on 3 May 2019.

Friday 14 June

Typhoon jets on QRA alert launched during the evening of Friday 14 June to intercept a Russian SU-30 fighter aircraft that was flying to the north of Estonia.

A Typhoon pilot from XI(Fighter) Squadron on duty when the scramble was called he said:

We were scrambled to intercept a contact close to Estonian airspace in the early evening, between two periods of poor weather. Shortly after getting airborne we came alongside a SU-30 Flanker fighter aircraft. We escorted the fighter over the Baltic sea, around Estonia and passing over another Russian military transport aircraft in the process.

Saturday 15 June

RAF crews made a second scramble on Saturday 15 June to intercept a Russian SU-30 Flanker fighter and an Ilyushin IL-76 Candid transport aircraft transiting north from Kaliningrad towards Estonian and Finnish airspace.

A Typhoon pilot from XI(Fighter) Squadron on completion of the intercept said:

We scrambled to intercept two contacts that were approaching Estonian airspace from the south. We escorted the two aircraft for 15 minutes as they transited back towards mainland Russia. We then handed over responsibility to two Finnish QRA aircraft, which had also been scrambled as the Russian aircraft operated on the airspace boundary between Estonia and Finland.

During both intercepts, the aircraft were flown at a safe distance and operated in a professional manner throughout.

The Royal Air Force is deployed on Operation AZOTIZE in Estonia in support of NATO Baltic Air Policing.

The UK operates in support of NATO to reassure our allies and is a further demonstration of the UK's commitment to the security of the region.

Elsewhere in the region over 800 personnel from the British Army lead the

NATO enhanced Forward Presence battlegroup in Estonia and Poland, while nearly 2,000 UK Armed Forces personnel are contributing to the Joint Expeditionary Force's (JEF) maritime Baltic Protector deployment this summer.

[News story: Military personnel receive over £4million in extra cash to protect them from Scottish tax hikes](#)

Over 7000 soldiers, sailors and airmen and women who were adversely affected by the Scottish Government's tax hikes last year will receive extra remuneration in their pay slip at the end of this month.

The payments total £4.1million with an average payment of £580. This is a one-off yearly payment, which is taxable, but with the net effect of raising the take-home pay of service personnel to the level set in the rest of the UK. Last year the MOD announced that to counter tax hikes by the Scottish Government, the MOD would provide financial mitigation to ensure that thousands of personnel would not be negatively affected.

Defence Secretary Penny Mordaunt said:

Scotland plays a vital role in the defence of the UK, attracting thousands of personnel with the type of skills we want to retain in our military.

It is right that we do everything we can to look after our people and their families. This extra cash will help ensure that Scotland continues to be an attractive place to serve.

The move came after concerns that income tax changes could result in Scotland becoming a less attractive place for military personnel to be posted. It will also help with recruitment and retention, particularly as many of those affected personnel in Scotland have specialist skills, such as aircraft and submarine engineers.

The payments will be made to all regular personnel who pay Scottish Income Tax, regardless of where in the world they are serving. The mitigation payments will cover all those affected by £12 or more, but payments will be capped for our highest paid officers impacted above £1,500.

In March of this year, the MOD announced that financial mitigation payments will continue to be made for the 2019/20 tax year. Decisions on financial mitigation for future tax years will be made on a yearly basis.

Scottish Secretary David Mundell said:

I welcome the MOD making these extra payments to our servicemen and women. Military personnel make a huge contribution to Scottish communities and our economy, and it is unfair for them to be hit in the pocket by the Scottish Government's decision to make Scotland the highest taxed part of the UK.

It is right that the UK Government protects them from this Scottish Government-imposed penalty. The last Scottish Government budget in December 2018 confirmed further divergence between Scottish and UK tax rates and as a result the financial compensation cap for Armed Forces personnel liable for Scottish tax has risen from £1500 to £2200.

Scotland plays an important role in UK Defence supporting over 10,000 industry jobs and is renowned for building the world's finest warships including the UK's new aircraft carriers and the Royal Navy's state-of-art Type-26 frigates.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans Tobias Ellwood said:

Our Armed Forces serve the entire country and these payments ensure that our personnel are not disadvantaged as a result of their employment.

We will continue to provide mitigation payments for this financial year, in order to give military personnel the certainty that they will not be out of pocket as a result of being posted to Scotland.

Scotland also benefits from £1.6 billion of defence investment in local industry and an average of £290 expenditure per person each year. Scotland is also home to some of the most important national defence capabilities including HM Naval Base Clyde, home to Britain's nuclear deterrent and hunter-killer submarines, and RAF Lossiemouth, which defends the UK's airspace with its three Typhoon combat aircraft squadrons and 51st Infantry Brigade.

[News story: New measures to support disadvantaged children in schools](#)

The schools admission code will be changed so that the most vulnerable children, such as those fleeing domestic abuse, can access a school place

more quickly, Education Secretary Damian Hinds has announced today (17 June).

New analysis lays bare the extent of disadvantage, with every classroom having three children who have come into contact with a social worker and 1.6 million children needing a social worker at some point in the last three years. These children suffer further as they often miss out on education, being three times more likely to be persistently absent from school and four times more likely to be permanently excluded.

In a speech at Reform, the Education Secretary outlined the changing nature of disadvantage and a package of measures to support the most vulnerable in society, including new research on how to tackle persistent absence from school and exploring the expansion of advocates within education so that all children in need of a social worker, and not just those in care, are given the support they need.

Schools will also receive guidance on how to use the Pupil Premium most effectively, with evidence from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) showing the success of particular methods in improving educational outcomes.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said in a speech today:

We understand children in care have very poor outcomes. Actually the truth is the outcomes for children in need of a social worker are almost as bad but there are five times as many of them.

We also know the effects of this sustain. Overall if you've needed contact with a social worker at any time since year 5, on average you are going to score 20 grades lower across eight GCSEs.

We need to improve the visibility of this group, both in schools and in the system as a whole. We need to make sure in every case that information is passed on to a social worker when a child moves school.

We also need to improve our knowledge of what works to support and help these children. We must not lower our expectations for them – for these children it is more important that they can do their very best to make the most of their talents when they're at school.

Included within the package of measures announced today are:

- Taking forward changes to the School Admissions Code and improving the speed of the in-year admissions process so vulnerable children can access a school place as quickly as possible;
- Making sure the mental health difficulties of children with social workers is tackled by ensuring both initial teacher training and the social work standards equip professionals with the right knowledge and skills on mental health. The Department for Education will bring together best practice on how to support children who have experienced childhood adversity, including the impact on mental health;

- Better sharing of information between councils and schools, including making sure social workers are informed when a child they support is excluded from school, and closer working between schools and councils to improve educational outcomes for disadvantaged pupils;
- Working across Government to tackle the causes of disadvantage, including on domestic abuse, drug and alcohol misuse, mental health, serious violence, and exploitation; and
- Making sure disadvantaged children are in education, by taking forward the [Timpson Review](#) recommendations and tackling off-rolling, absence and exclusions.

While the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers has narrowed by at least 9.5% since 2011, disadvantage continues to lead to poorer outcomes that the Education Secretary today said need to be confronted head on.

Sir Kevan Collins, Chief Executive of the Education Endowment Foundation, said:

Giving every young person the best start in life, whatever their background and wherever they come from, is a mission that unites teachers. By acknowledging the relationship between family income and educational success, the Pupil Premium cuts right to the heart of the reason most of us became educators.

The Pupil Premium is the key lever for closing the attainment gap and greater security of funding supports schools to plan ahead with confidence. We know that it has enabled headteachers to focus attention and make a difference for their most disadvantaged pupils. This is achieving results in schools across England, but there is undoubtedly more to do to.

We've published new guidance to help schools spend their Pupil Premium to maximise the benefit for their students. Crucially, we want to strengthen the ways the Premium can be spent to recruit, retain and develop great teachers for all children.

Amanda Spielman, Ofsted Chief Inspector, said:

The Pupil Premium provides welcome additional funding for schools, recognising those with some of the biggest challenges. The EEF's new guidance on how to spend it rightly emphasises recruiting, retaining and developing great teachers.

In order to be effective, the Pupil Premium must not become a cause of unnecessary work for teachers. Ofsted does not require any school-generated data on the Pupil Premium beyond the school's Pupil Premium strategy, and does not require schools to track eligible pupils or provide evidence of closing within school attainment gaps.

To further improve standards in schools the Government is targeting extra support at some of the poorest areas of the country, through its £72 million Opportunity Areas programme and £12 million Opportunity North East. Up to £26 million is also being invested in the National Schools Breakfast Programme, which will kick-start or improve breakfast clubs in over 1,700 schools.

The Department for Education is providing more support for early learning than ever before and has a new focus on the home learning environment, providing £3.5 billion this year alone in free early years education and the 30 hours free offer which already supports many families from lower incomes.