

Press release: New prison anti-corruption taskforce unveiled

- new unit 'closing the net' on corrupt staff in prisons
- team of specialists installed to tackle the threat
- part of wider crackdown on crime behind bars

The new Counter Corruption Unit began work earlier this month and will proactively pursue those suspected of corrupt activity in prison and probation services across England and Wales.

Working closely with law enforcement agencies, these specialist staff will investigate and disrupt criminality, and bring more prosecutions against those causing harm behind bars.

Crucially, the new taskforce will serve to protect the vast majority of prison and probation staff who are honest and hardworking. It will take action to counter the chaos and violence caused by the few who smuggle illicit items into our jails or impede our ability to supervise offenders in the community effectively.

The unit comprises 29 specialist staff split into a national team and 5 regional teams. Within these teams are expert intelligence analysts who will examine threats to the organisation.

Justice Secretary David Gauke said:

Our prison staff are overwhelmingly dedicated and honest and do their best to instil safety and order in our jails.

We have seen from recent criminal prosecutions, however, that a small minority continue to engage in corrupt behaviour in our prisons – damaging both the integrity of the system and their profession.

This unit underlines our determination to stamp out criminality in prison in all its forms and will make sure we are closing the net on the individuals driving this, allowing the focus to be on safety and rehabilitation and ultimately keeping the public safer.

Corruption can range from a member of staff having a relationship with a prisoner to bringing in drugs and contraband for individual prisoners or organised crime groups. The unit complements prison security teams that can already search staff, including with metal detectors and baggage scanners.

The new Counter Corruption Unit has 4 aims to combat the threat:

- protect against corruption by building an open and resilient

organisation

- prevent people from engaging in corruption, strengthening professional integrity
- pursue and punish those involved in corruption
- prepare prisons to minimise the impact of corruption where it does occur.

The police will be working with HM Prison Service to co-ordinate this work, reflecting the fact that corruption can extend beyond the prison walls – sometimes involving criminal kingpins orchestrating activity from their cells.

The new team accompanies our £70 million investment to improve safety, security and decency in prisons. This includes funding for new security scanners, improved searching techniques, phone-blocking technology and a financial crime unit to identify and seize assets linked to crime behind bars.

This has come against a backdrop of rising prison officer numbers, with more than 4,700 additional officers now recruited since October 2016 and staffing levels at their highest since 2012.

Notes to editors

- Broadcasters: A pre-recorded interview with the Justice Secretary David Gauke is available on a pooled basis. Please contact Sky News at Millbank to obtain this
- for security reasons, we are unable facilitate the recording of the Counter Corruption Unit's work

[Press release: Schools backed to tackle bad behaviour](#)

More than 500 schools will be part of a pioneering scheme to tackle bad behaviour in schools, backed by £10million investment.

Behaviour expert and former teacher Tom Bennett, who led a national review to identify the best ways of dealing with disruptive behaviour in schools, will lead the programme, where a network of expert schools will be identified to help teachers and school leaders in need of support.

More than 82% of parents consider good discipline in the class a key factor when choosing a school for their child, according to research. However, over a third of schools are not currently judged as having good enough behaviour by Ofsted. With low level disruption costing individual pupils up to 38 days a year of learning and dealing with poor behaviour cited as a key reason for

teachers leaving the profession, the Government is determined to take action.

School Standards Minister Nick Gibb said:

Calm and safe learning environments benefit all students, allowing them to concentrate fully on their studies. Just one instance of bad behaviour in a classroom can derail an entire lesson and hold back every single other pupil in the room.

We know these instances of classroom disruption damage teachers' morale and increase workload and stress and that's why we want schools to instil cultures of good behaviour top to bottom.

As a Government, continuing the improvement of pupil behaviour in our schools is a key priority. With £10million of funding, the support provided to schools will allow teachers to get on with what they do best – teaching – and empower school leaders to implement their behaviour policies correctly and robustly.

The network will be made up of schools that have exemplary behaviour management practices and effective whole-school cultures. They will work with other schools offering advice on ways to better manage behaviour using measures that have been proven to have an effect.

These could include:

- intensive staff training on tackling classroom disruption;
- introducing centralised detention systems;
- new sanctions and rewards systems for pupils; and
- focusing on pupil attendance and punctuality.

Tom Bennett, the Department's Lead Behaviour Adviser, said:

Good behaviour is fundamental – not just to great learning, but countless other goals we value. However, too many students don't enjoy classrooms where they can thrive and feel safe, and teachers need support and training to ensure this is the case.

This scheme may very well be one of the most significant strategies for public good we have seen in decades and I'm thrilled to be leading this national programme that will help schools become safer and calmer, allowing more children and staff to flourish.

Leora Cruddas, Chief Executive of the Confederation of School Trusts (CST), said:

Good standards of behaviour in a school are essential to pupil safety and success. Every child has the right to go to a school where they feel safe and able to learn. Where there is a culture of

high standards of behaviour in a school, more learning takes place and pupils achieve more academically.

As Tom Bennett said in the independent review of behaviour in schools, the key task for a school or trust leader is to create a culture – usefully defined as ‘the way we do things around here’ – that is understood and subscribed to by the whole community.

Identifying those schools and trusts with strong cultures of good behaviour will enable the system to share the strongest educational philosophies and practices.

Dean Godson, Director of Policy Exchange, said:

This announcement is welcome recognition of the impact low-level disruption and bad behaviour can have on the learning of an entire class. Policy Exchange’s research has shown how important it is that teachers feel they have authority to maintain discipline and will appreciate knowing that they have the Government’s support.

A team of advisers will shortly be appointed to work alongside Mr Bennett to help develop and deliver the programme of support. The advisers will be education professionals with a track-record and understanding of improving behaviour in schools and will play a crucial role in:

- helping select the lead behaviour schools which will deliver additional support to others;
- working with supported schools to develop an understanding of the causes of the behaviour issues and how these could be addressed;
- developing comprehensive, bespoke action plans for the supported schools;
- carrying out a series of follow-up visits; and
- participating in behaviour conferences to share best practice and ideas.

By the end of the programme, teachers in schools are expected to report fewer incidents of disruptive behaviour and pupils should report they feel safer at school, while able to learn more effectively.

The programme will launch in September 2020 and the programme will run for an initial period of 3 years, improving the culture in schools and sharing good practice, producing disciplined environments where pupils feel safe and able to learn.

Today’s announcement builds on the Secretary of State, Damian Hinds’, commitment in October 2018 to invest £10 million for schools to share best practice in behaviour management and was reiterated in the Department’s Recruitment & Retention Strategy published in January 2019.

[News story: New general licences for controlling Canada geese and wood pigeon comes into force](#)

The licences, which allows people to kill or take [Canada geese to preserve public health and safety](#) and [wood pigeon for preventing serious damage to crops](#) are part of a programme to replace the previous general licences for controlling 16 species of birds.

Natural England is working at full speed to ensure that those affected by the decision to revoke three general licences can continue to control certain wild birds where necessary.

Further general licences will be issued as quickly as possible. This will mean people can continue to take necessary action as they do now, whilst also taking into account the needs of wildlife.

Those who need to control Canada geese and wood pigeon in the circumstances described in this licence can now do so without further steps – there is no need to apply for an individual licence. For people in other circumstances who need to take action in other situations before new general licences are issued, Natural England has also published a simple online application system for individual control licences. During the application process users will be advised how to take urgent action if they cannot wait for their application to be determined.

The decision to revoke these licences was not taken lightly. Natural England explored all other options available, but was left with no choice but to revoke the licences. This was done to protect people with legitimate reasons to control wildlife from potentially committing offences by acting outside the law.

Natural England's interim chief executive Marian Spain said:

The new licences should give peace of mind to people who need to shoot to control certain wildlife that they can do so within the law.

I recognise, as does my team at Natural England, that the interim measures will cause disruption for licence users. This is not a ban on control, it is a change to the licences that allow control to take place.

Next steps

Natural England is committed to working with farmers, pest controllers, gamekeepers and other professionals who rely on these licences to ensure everyone who needs to control the 16 species of wild birds covered by the revoked general licences can.

If people need to take action for species which are still not covered by a general licence, they will need to apply for an individual licence, using our [simple application form on GOV.UK](#).

Background

- To apply for an individual species licence, please make use of the online application system. Apply now: [Direct link to the online application forms](#).
- Get the latest comment on this story on the Natural England blog.
- Currently the three licences subject to the legal challenge cover 16 bird species, including several members of the crow family (crows, magpies, rooks, jackdaws and jays), feral and wood pigeon and number of invasive non-native species (such as Canada goose).

The specific licences:

- General licence GL04: To kill or take certain species of wild birds to prevent serious damage or disease
- General licence GL05: To kill or take certain species of wild birds to preserve public health or public safety
- General licence GL06: To kill or take certain species of wild birds to conserve wild birds or flora or fauna

[Press release: Foreign Secretary welcomes more than £64 million of British funding for Kenyan industry](#)

- £52 million of UK funding has been raised for solar power plant, creating up to 250 jobs in Kenya
- £11 million investment by British business De La Rue to produce high-tech identity cards, tax stamps, and currency
- £1.4 million package of support for creative industries in Kenya and Nigeria

The Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt has today welcomed over £64 million of funding for Kenyan businesses on the final day of his week-long visit to Africa.

This included a new agreement which will see British business De La Rue invest £11 million to boost its production in Kenya of identity cards, tax stamps and currency, creating new high-skilled jobs locally.

He also welcomed the announcement that £52 million of UK investment has been raised for a solar power plant, with construction expected to start soon and power to come online in 2020. This innovative project, run by British-headquartered power company, Globeleq, and funded by CDC, the UK's development finance institution, will bring clean power to the Malindi region in South East Kenya, which currently struggles with regular power shortages and relies largely on expensive thermal plants. This is set to transform the local economy, with up to 250 direct jobs being created and a further 5,600 jobs in the wider economy supported thanks to the availability of power.

Finally, the Foreign Secretary announced an additional £1.4 million package of support targeted at the creative industries in Kenya and Nigeria. The Creative Enterprise programme will help 540 entrepreneurs from across the two countries access training and support in the UK.

Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt said:

I have seen for myself the incredible opportunities opening up between the UK and Kenya and the close partnership which already exists between our countries. It is great to see British investment creating jobs, prosperity and growth in Kenya and across the continent.

These announcements came as Jeremy Hunt took part in a 'Dragon's Den' style event today in Nairobi, to help find Kenya's next budding entrepreneur.

As part of a UK aid funded programme 10 shortlisted candidates pitched to the Foreign Secretary and a panel of entrepreneurs and innovators for the chance to access up to £100,000 each in grant funding and technical assistance to help them scale up.

The winners of the pitching event were Ten Senses Africa, TakaTaka Solutions, Lynk Jobs Limited, Savanna Circuit and Build Her.

Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt said:

As a former entrepreneur myself, I have been inspired by the dynamic and talented businessmen and women I have met in Kenya, and look forward to seeing their fantastic companies become the household names of the future.

The pitching event was the first of its kind under the new Kenya Catalytic Jobs Fund, a £5 million UK aid funded programme, announced during the Prime Minister's visit last year. The Jobs Fund, which is being implemented by MercyCorp, supports tried and tested business ideas, helping them scale up to

stimulate large-scale job creation in Kenya.

De La Rue's Regional Director for Africa, Matt West said:

This innovative Joint Venture with the Government of Kenya, which builds on De La Rue's already long and productive business relationships here, expands the opportunities for highly skilled jobs for Kenyans and opens up the prospect of new business in the region, which will add yet more value to this highly productive partnership.

Moses Anibaba, the British Council's Regional Director for Sub-Saharan Africa, said:

This is an exciting and highly anticipated launch by the Foreign Secretary of a proven creative enterprise support model, that we piloted in Lagos, Nigeria and are now expanding in Nigeria and Kenya.

The programme presents a unique opportunity for young entrepreneurs in the UK and Africa to connect, create jobs and build enterprises in what is a fast-growing industry and one that is a sector of competitive advantage, in both countries.

I am convinced that through the programme, the partnership between the Creative economies of the UK and Africa will be strengthened, enhancing creative expression and prosperity.

Successful candidates of this first pitching event will receive a £100,000 grant and technical assistance to scale their businesses and create jobs. The Kenya Catalytic Jobs Fund is being implemented by MercyCorp.

Creative Enterprise is a £1.4 million UK commitment to extending support for employability and enterprise in the creative industries sector in Kenya and Nigeria with the British Council.

- the 2018 to 2019 pilot in Lagos is being replicated in Nairobi this year and expanded in Nigeria to Abuja, Kano and Owerri
- in the Lagos pilot, UK-delivery partners Henley Business School and Fashion Foundry worked with 108 entrepreneurs on an 11-week intensive course, 40 creative hub managers were trained and 1.8 million people were reached online through the project website and social media.
- the expansion will allow 540 young entrepreneurs across 5 cities to attend the intensive courses and 60 hub managers to visit the UK.

Further information

Press release: Education Secretary confirms plans to simplify school accountability

Speaking at the National Association of Head Teachers' annual conference in Telford today, the Education Secretary Damian Hinds announced a new call for evidence on high needs funding and confirmed plans to remove floor and coasting standards in favour of a single trigger for school support.

Simplifying accountability

At last year's NAHT conference the Secretary of State said he would simplify the accountability system to reduce undue pressure on school leaders, which can lead to excessive workload that distracts teachers from teaching.

Between January and March we consulted on proposals which set out plans to create a new single, transparent method for identifying schools eligible for improvement support. These proposals removed the floor and coasting standards and instead using Ofsted Requires Improvement as the sole trigger to identify schools for support.

We received 267 responses to the consultation, the majority of which supported the proposals:

- 82% of respondents supported the proposal to use Ofsted Requires Improvement judgements to identify schools eligible for these DfE offers of support.
- 82% of respondents agreed that we should remove floor and coasting data standards.

So from September 2019, the DfE will only use Ofsted Requires Improvement judgements as the sole trigger to identify schools for a proactive, optional offer of support.

The outcome of the consultation can be read in full [here](#) and the Secretary of State's speech at the NAHT conference [here](#).

Call for evidence on High Needs

Over a quarter of a million pupils with the most complex needs have personalised Education, Health and Care Plans – following their introduction in 2014 to make sure young people get the tailored support they need to thrive.

Of those students with Education Health and Care Plans almost 120,000 are continuing their education in mainstream schools, while the number of pupils

whose needs are being met in special schools has gone up from 94,000 in 2014 to over 112,00 in 2018.

And whilst the the High Needs Budget has risen from £5billion in 2013 to over £6billion today, we need to make sure that we understand what is driving the costs in the system.

Ahead of the Spending Review, Education Secretary Damian Hinds will ask schools and colleges for their views on how to make funding arrangements for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities more effective.

The department will now work with all those involved in the SEND system to hear directly about how it can work better to improve outcomes for young people and whether funding could be distributed more effectively.

The [call for evidence launches today](#) and will run until 31st July.