

Press release: UK government has successfully pushed for a review into Palestinian textbooks

After calls by the UK government for international action on education materials, a group of international partners, including the UK will lead a review into the books included in the Palestinian Authority's current curriculum for primary and secondary school children.

The results of the review will be used to identify the steps necessary to ensure such books promote peace and tolerance. Work on this topic will begin immediately, with results from the review available to the Palestinian Authority and partners by September 2019. The Palestinian Authority have agreed to engage constructively with the findings of the review.

The UK will play a central role in the review process, and intends to commission the Georg Eckert Institute to produce an initial scoping report to expedite the production of the full review.

International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt said:

The UK is rightly at the forefront of the international community on this issue. We are working closely with the Palestinian Authority to ensure that all Palestinian children receive a decent education and are able to fulfil their potential.

UK aid is helping to provide quality education for children in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including through paying the salaries of specially vetted teachers in the West Bank. UK aid does not fund the writing or provision of textbooks by the Palestinian Authority, and all UK aid to the Palestinian Authority is subject to rigorous safeguards to ensure aid is used for its intended purpose.

Note to editors

- The Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research is a leading international institute for analysing education media. It is a publicly funded institution based in Germany.
 - The UK intends to commission this organisation to conduct an initial report into the best way for textbooks to be analysed.
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News story: Study suggesting widespread illegal killing of hen harriers on English grouse moors published

A new study reveals that young hen harriers in England suffer abnormally high mortality compared to populations in Orkney and mainland Scotland and the study provides compelling evidence that the most likely cause is illegal killing in areas associated with grouse moor management.

Published today in Nature Communications this paper represents the culmination of a 10-year Natural England study involving 58 satellite tagged hen harriers. The analyses have been led by the University of Cape Town and Aberdeen University with the provision of land use data by the RSPB.

The study showed the likelihood of hen harriers dying, or disappearing, was ten times higher within areas predominantly covered by grouse moor, compared to areas with no grouse moor. The study revealed that 72% of tagged harriers were either confirmed or considered very likely to have been illegally killed.

The hen harrier, sometimes called the 'skydancer' because of its amazing acrobatic display in the breeding season, is one of England's rarest birds and is legally protected. Illegal killing of hen harriers has long been thought to limit their population size, but identifying the scale of these crimes and their impact on harrier populations has been difficult because they occur in remote areas and evidence is likely to be destroyed, thus successful prosecutions are rare.

This long-term study has enabled patterns of disappearances to be assessed across a large number of birds. This provides overwhelming evidence that illegal killing is occurring on some grouse moors, where some gamekeepers view hen harriers as a threat to their grouse stocks.

Rob Cooke, Natural England Director said:

Natural England is working in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders, including moorland communities, conservation organisations, police and landowners to implement the joint Hen Harrier Action Plan which aims to improve the conservation status of this at-risk bird.

This year's Hen Harrier breeding season has been the most successful in over a decade with 34 chicks fledged across the country. While this is a great start we recognise that a continued partnership approach is required to combat illegal persecution of

these rare birds and ensure that numbers of breeding hen harriers continue to grow.

Stephen Murphy from Natural England led the data collection and commented:

Natural England welcomes the publication of this study, which demonstrates the value of tagging as a legitimate conservation tool. These analyses are a significant step in understanding the fate of tagged hen harriers, and confirm what has long been suspected – that illegal persecution is having a major impact on the conservation status of this bird.

Dr Megan Murgatroyd, from the University of Cape Town, who is the lead author of the study said:

Natural England's long-term commitment to this tracking study has yielded an important dataset involving over 20,000 individual fixes. This is a remarkable achievement for a species whose population in England has averaged only a handful of pairs for the last few years. Whilst dead harriers can be disposed of, the pattern of hen harrier disappearances revealed by this data could not be hidden. The multiple levels of analyses of the data have all led to the same robust conclusion that hen harriers in Britain suffer elevated levels of mortality on grouse moors, and this is most likely the result of illegal killing.

Dr David Douglas, RSPB Principal Conservation Scientist and a co-author on the paper, said:

The high rate of illegal persecution on grouse moors revealed by this study goes a long way to explaining why hen harriers are barely hanging on as a breeding bird in England. Satellite tag data is giving us very valuable insights into what is happening to our birds of prey in the UK. It has already provided compelling evidence of the link between suspicious golden eagle deaths and grouse moors in Scotland and now it has done the same for hen harriers in England.

The report, [Patterns of satellite tagged hen harrier disappearances suggest widespread illegal killing on British grouse moors](#), can be found online on Nature Communications.

[News story: Healthcare advice for UK travellers in the event of a no-deal EU Exit](#)

Leaving the EU with a deal remains the government's top priority and would give all UK nationals the stability and certainty to prepare for our new relationship after EU Exit. However, the government must plan for every possible outcome, including no deal.

Today, we are updating UK nationals on the Department of Health and Social Care's plans for the continuity of reciprocal healthcare arrangements in the event we exit the EU without a deal.

All UK nationals who are planning to reside in, travel to, work or study in the EU or European Free Trade Area (EFTA) states (Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein and Switzerland) are strongly advised to check the latest country-specific guidance on [GOV.UK](#) and [NHS.UK](#) about healthcare arrangements if the UK leaves the EU without a deal.

The Department of Health and Social Care has been working closely with EU member states and EFTA states to protect existing healthcare arrangements for these and other groups. However, it is not possible for the UK government to guarantee access unilaterally to healthcare abroad.

Actions for UK nationals

Visitors to the EU

The government always advises UK nationals to take out travel insurance when going overseas, both to EU and non-EU destinations. UK nationals, including those with pre-existing conditions, planning to visit a country in the EU/EFTA on exit day should continue to buy travel insurance.

Any questions regarding individual travel insurance policies should be directed to the relevant insurance companies or refer to guidance published on the [Association of British Insurers \(ABI\) website](#).

Residents in the EU

Substantial numbers of UK nationals will already be eligible for or enrolled in local health services, because of their residency, benefits or employment status. There is no reason to think that a no-deal scenario will affect these arrangements where EU countries offer equal access to healthcare.

UK nationals resident in the EU are advised to register their healthcare entitlement with their local authorities, if they have not already done so. This may mean that they will need to join a social insurance scheme and contribute as other residents do. Others will need to buy private healthcare

insurance.

The UK government's offer

In order to continue to support the healthcare needs of UK nationals, we have made an offer to EU member states and EFTA states to maintain the existing healthcare arrangements, in both a deal or no-deal scenario, until 31 December 2020.

This would mean that we will continue to pay for healthcare costs for current or former UK residents for whom the UK has responsibility who are living or working in or visiting the EU.

We have brought forward legislation to enable us to implement new reciprocal healthcare arrangements.

Although we are hopeful that EU member states will accept our offer, as a responsible government we have developed a multi-layered approach to minimise disruption to healthcare provision for UK nationals currently in or travelling to the EU:

- some EU member states have prepared their own legislation for a no-deal scenario. Spain has publicly committed to healthcare access for resident and visiting UK nationals
- the UK and Ireland are committed to continuing healthcare access within the Common Travel Area
- the UK has already agreed with EFTA states to protect citizens' rights, including healthcare
- the UK will fund healthcare for UK nationals who have applied for, or are undergoing, treatment in the EU prior to and on exit day, for up to one year
- we have published country-specific guidance on GOV.UK and NHS.UK
- UK nationals may use NHS services if they return to live in the UK
- those who have their healthcare funded by the UK and are resident in the EU on exit day can use NHS services in England without charge when on a temporary visit
- the ABI has advised that travel insurance policies will cover emergency medical treatment costs that could have been reclaimed through European Health Insurance Cards (EHICs)

If EU member states do not agree to extend the existing healthcare arrangements before exit day, many of the arrangements for access to healthcare in the EU would change for UK nationals. Healthcare arrangements in many member states would revert to those that apply to the rest of the world.

In a no-deal scenario, UK nationals may no longer be able to use their EHICs when travelling to the EU.

More information can be found in the [written ministerial statement to the House of Commons on Tuesday 19 March](#).

Speech: Troubled Families

Introduction

Thanks, Andy [Cook].

I too would like to pay tribute to the work of the CSJ, the Centre for Social Justice. Through you and your founder Iain Duncan Smith you have provided powerful leadership on the issues of poverty and social breakdown; challenging assumptions as well as developing pragmatic, imaginative solutions but rooted in the experience of some of the most vulnerable people in our society.

From Free Schools to the Modern Slavery Act, your influence I think has been hugely significant and very far-reaching and there's little doubt that you've succeed in your mission to put social justice at the heart of British politics.

As such, I'm hugely grateful to you for hosting us today and I very much look forward to seeing much more of your impressive work.

Now we're obviously meeting at an important moment in our country's history as we forge a new relationship with Europe and raise our ambitions for what kind of country we want to be – a country with a strong, outward-looking presence on the world stage, but also with a strong foundation of thriving communities at home.

That means renewing the cherished union not just between the four nations of our United Kingdom, but a new unionism between all our citizens – between the multiple units of solidarity; country, region, community and family that underpin it.

These units of solidarity, of identity and belonging, operate in many ways and on many levels.

But it's clear that the most important and keenly felt of these is family.

Rich or poor, it's the bedrock on which everything else is built – that teaches us the value of love and support, in good times and bad.

That determines our ability to form healthy relationships, our levels of resilience.

How well we do at school and into adulthood.

That connects us to the wider community and the world beyond.

I know I speak for many when I say that my family is the most important thing

in my life – I would certainly have not have got through my illness last year without my wife and children by my side.

That's why this government is championing families at every turn:

- driving down the number of households where nobody works by almost a million
- driving up the number of good and outstanding schools
- extending free childcare
- helping more families onto the housing ladder through Help to Buy and by scrapping stamp duty for most first-time buyers
- easing pressures on families by cutting income tax and introducing the National Living Wage

And let's not forget milestones like the introduction of same sex marriage, measures to support flexible working and shared parental leave and now proposals to introduce blame-free divorce – important steps that to help somehow to strengthen the bonds of family further and protect them in difficult times but equally recognise the issues and structures that lie behind it.

Now it's important to see how we can bond that unit of family together.

When families thrive, we all thrive.

But sadly, the reverse is also true.

As the CSJ's latest research shows, young people who experience family breakdown under the age of 18 are more likely to experience homelessness, crime and imprisonment, educational underachievement, alcoholism, teenage pregnancy and mental health issues.

Quite apart from the dire consequences for communities, there's the enormous personal toll – in wasted potential, in lives unlived.

It is a dangerous disconnection between these families and wider society – a society in which many feel they have no stake.

And in many ways I have the CSJ to thank for helping make that crystal clear to me.

Back in 2006, I took part in a CSJ Programme which saw MPs spending a week with a charity working on some of the toughest social problems.

I spent my week in Devonport in Plymouth with a charity supporting the adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse.

It gave me the chance to shadow some of those out on the frontline working to combat social exclusion, deprivation and antisocial behaviour.

One particular moment has guided and informed my thinking ever since.

Walking through one of the run-down estates, I asked one of the social

workers why the families of the truanting kids they worked with didn't actively encourage their children to go to school to improve the opportunities available and give them that step up.

The answer was as direct as it was bleak.

Well if they did that it would remind them of the inadequacies of their own lives.

This stark picture of the engrained challenges of inter-generational deprivation has stuck with me.

It made clear to me that you can't tackle the complex and overlapping problems that struggling families face – worklessness, persistent truanting, health problems, crime and anti-social behaviour, domestic abuse and vulnerable children – in silos.

That you need to join up support and work with whole families, and not just individuals, to change lives.

None of this is especially revolutionary – it's just common sense.

And that profoundly is what lies at the heart of the Troubled Families Programme.

The results – as seen in the latest [national Programme evaluation](#) being published today – I think speak for themselves.

When compared to a similar comparison group, the programme of targeted intervention saw:

- the number of children going into care down by a third
- the number of adults going to prison down by a quarter and juveniles in custody down by a third
- 10% fewer people claiming Jobseekers Allowance

There is of course, more to do, but I think this is a significant achievement and a tribute to the tireless efforts of family workers, local authorities and their many partners in our public services and the voluntary sector.

I'm hugely thankful to them.

What they've achieved adds up to more people back in work, often in families where unemployment was seen as the norm.

This isn't just about the financial boost provided by a regular wage, but

about the pride and dignity that comes from taking control of your own life. About children growing up with an example of hard work and aspiration.

Equally important for the next generation is the security and stability provided by more families staying together as the pressures on social care and criminal justice system ease.

This means a lot to the families who've benefitted.

People like 13-year-old Kyle whose anti-social, gang-related behaviour – developed against a backdrop of historic domestic abuse and the death of his father – had left him and his mum Sue facing eviction from their home.

Thanks to the wrap-around support organised by the Programme's family worker, based in the Youth Justice Service, Kyle hasn't been in trouble since, his behaviour and attendance at school has improved and Sue now has her own support network outside the family.

The Programme has also made all the difference for 16-year-old Daniel and his father John.

Following a difficult childhood, he had developed serious problems – self-harming, threatening suicide, regularly smoking cannabis – which had left John too scared to leave him on his own despite his desperation to get a job.

Again, the family worker's intervention in organising parenting and employment support for John and counselling and specialist support for Daniel was instrumental in helping improve his mental health, encouraging him to apply to an art college and helping John find work as a security guard.

Just 2 examples.

And it underlines why we must never give up on people like them and the families that this Programme is designed to support.

The problems they face – tangled, entrenched, with deep roots – are among the most challenging in our society.

Before beginning the Programme, over half of the families were on benefits.

More than two fifths had at least one person with a mental health issue.

In 1 in 6 families, 1 person was dependent on non-prescription drugs or alcohol.

And in over a fifth, at least 1 person had been affected by domestic abuse.

One of these issues alone is enough to be dealing with.

When they're multiplied, the effects are devastating – for the families concerned, affecting their ability almost literally to get through each day.

But also sometimes for their neighbours, their classmates and the wider community; who can find themselves on the receiving end of disruptive and

distressing behaviour as a result.

In providing support, equally, we should not make excuses for behaviour which falls well short of what should be expected.

As their issues have burgeoned, these families have usually found themselves becoming the passive recipients of services and becoming more isolated and alone.

This is not, in any way, inevitable and there are plenty of examples of people who have beat overwhelming odds to succeed – and those who will say: “They did it by themselves, so everyone should be able to do it.”

But when you dig deeper, it turns out that there are usually people who had their back.

A loving parent who, even though money was tight, was not short on aspiration.

An inspirational teacher who lifted their sights and broadened their horizons.

A neighbour, a friend of a friend who helped secure a lucky break.

Because the truth is no-one ever does it alone. We are all the product of a multitude of small kindnesses done to us and done for us.

We all need support and commitment to achieve our full potential; to grow, branch out and reach our goals.

That starts with stronger families – as the cornerstone of stronger communities.

And that’s the spirit that runs right through this Programme.

Families working together to rise together.

Agencies across sectors working together to help them succeed.

This represents a fundamental shift in how the state supports those who depend on it; centred not on systems and processes, but on people and forging a common sense of purpose among all involved.

For families previously used to being shunted between a host of different, often disjointed services; all with their own assessments, thresholds, appointments and approaches, the role of the family worker, in particular, is a huge breakthrough.

Someone who builds trust and rallies everyone to agree a plan to rebuild their lives, based on their ambitions – and, who, then, crucially, is a single, consistent point of contact coordinating and mobilising all the necessary specialist services, such as mental health or debt advice.

The impact of this should not be underestimated.

Problems caught early before they escalate into a crisis.

People no longer having to go through the emotionally draining process of repeating and repeating and repeating their stories to multiple services.

A boost in confidence, new skills and resilience as families, as the extra help provided with practical issues – such as parenting and household budgeting – pay off.

We know families value this support – this second chance to not so much transform their lives as rediscover them.

To tap into their own power and agency to change them for the better.

And this is the point – the Programme doesn't affect this change. They do.

But the benefits of the Troubled Families Programme don't end there.

It's changed the way people deliver services too.

Many of those working on the Programme have talked about silos breaking down and a marked change in culture and ways of working; with more sharing of information and discussion between partners as their eyes are opened to a fuller picture of a family's circumstances.

We know that the improved use and sharing of data across agencies has also helped identify families most in need of help, helped target services and track family progress more effectively, with systems increasingly picking up early indications of need – paving the way for improved commissioning of services in the future.

But perhaps the biggest gain is a greater sense of solidarity among services who have worked with these families, who are among the hardest to help, for years, but who now grasp just how much more can be achieved for them when they come together.

According to the evaluation, over half of Troubled Families Coordinators agree all agencies have a common purpose – up from 43% the previous year (2016).

Moreover, just over two thirds of Coordinators say the Programme has been effective at achieving long-term positive change in wider system reform.

This is really encouraging to hear.

The Programme is breaking new ground in developing best practice and, as with anything new, you learn as you go.

And yes we've undoubtedly learned a lot from the first phase of the Programme; improving the way we evaluate it by not only drawing on data from more local authorities over 5 years instead of just 1 year, but also through surveys with staff, including family workers and specialist employment advisers, and by speaking to families who've been involved.

And we're keen to continue to think about what we could do differently and better – and this is where it is fair to say that I think we need to look again at the name of the Programme.

I understand why we alighted on phrase 'Troubled Families', but, in reality, it obscures as much as it enlightens.

At its worst it points an accusing finger at people, who are already isolated, and says to them "you are the 'others' and you are not like the rest of us".

When, in truth, they are like the rest of us, they've just had a little less help, been a little less lucky, and yes, made choices themselves that haven't led to the best outcomes.

But we don't give up on people in this country. People can make the most of a second chance.

That is the lesson of the Programme.

So we need something which better recognises its objective of creating stronger families.

Something that recognises where it might take us.

Because the implications for wider public service delivery are profound.

We had the new public management model under Margaret Thatcher in the Eighties.

Then the choice agenda, followed by the open public services agenda from 2010.

The Troubled Families Programme – with its model of services joining up around a whole family – I think suggests the next wave.

And fresh thinking is needed now more than ever to meet challenges we face.

I'm thinking especially of the horrors of knife crime, which is devastating families and communities.

This cannot go on.

Every violent incident, every injury, every young life lost is an absolute tragedy and we must act to ensure our children can grow up knowing they're safe and have a great future ahead of them.

The Troubled Families Programme – with its emphasis on early intervention and its track record of tackling complex challenges – has a valuable role to play in this endeavour.

It's why we're making a £9.5 million fund available within the existing Programme to focus on supporting children and families vulnerable to knife crime and gang culture – with a further £300,000 available to train frontline

staff on how to tackle childhood trauma.

The money will go to community-backed projects in 21 areas across England and I look forward to seeing it making a difference to families on the ground.

Conclusion

I have every confidence that it will make this difference because the real strength of the Troubled Families Programme – the real strength, too, of the CSJ’s approach – is that it’s not just trying to manage the challenges those families face. It’s changing lives in the long term.

In doing so, it’s addressing not just the symptoms, but the underlying issues that have held them back.

Just over three quarters of a century ago, in a similar spirit, Sir William Beveridge drafted the landmark report that laid the foundations for the welfare state.

The 5 “giant evils” he sought to eradicate – want, disease, ignorance, squalor and idleness – thankfully no longer loom so large, as attested by longer lifespans and better life chances.

But there is no denying that serious challenges remain.

And while we’re doing all we all can to ease pressures on families, we must also face up to new “giants” – such as, for example, increasing social isolation – the sense that while with the internet and social media we’ve never been better connected, many of us have never felt more alone.

And this perhaps is one of the biggest mountains that families on the Programme previously faced – the feeling they were battling multiple problems on multiple fronts on their own.

Not anymore.

At least 400,000 families have been helped by the Programme’s whole family approach as it goes mainstream; winning the confidence of councils and their partners alike with its proven ability to give people hope and a brighter future.

That’s why I believe in the Programme and want to see it go from strength to strength.

And why I will always do my utmost to champion these and other families – the principal units of solidarity that bind our communities and our country.

Put simply; whether as families or communities or as a country, we’re always stronger when we stand together.

And that simple but significant truth should guide our policy making for the future.

Thank you.

[News story: Demolition work begins at RAF Lakenheath](#)

A total of 18 buildings are being brought down to make way for construction of a flight simulator facility, a maintenance unit, new hangars and storage facilities.

Last November DIO awarded a contract worth £160 million to Kier VolkerFitzpatrick to deliver infrastructure to ready RAF Lakenheath for the aircraft in late 2021.

The Suffolk airbase will be the first permanent international site for US Air Force F-35s in Europe and continues the base's long and proud history of supporting US Air Force capability in the UK.

Many of the old buildings were built with heavily reinforced concrete so contractors have had to employ specific techniques and equipment to bring the buildings down efficiently. They are using a hydraulic excavator equipped with specialised attachments that can break concrete and steel, effectively 'chewing' the structures apart.

Waste materials will be recycled wherever possible. Timber and metal will be carefully preserved for re-use if appropriate. The concrete waste will be crushed, graded and re-used on the project.

The metal reinforcements in the buildings will be separated from the concrete and sent away to be recycled, possibly returning to site or to another construction project as reinforcement or structural steelwork.

Keith Maddison, DIO Programme Director, said:

The demolition of these 18 buildings is an important step in preparing the site, to allow the enabling works to be completed in preparation for construction to begin in the summer of this year, we are all working to a single goal of having the first aircraft arrival in late 2021.

The US Visiting Forces Infrastructure Programme is an incredibly exciting series of projects to work on and is strengthening the historic military ties between the two nations and the operating partnership between the RAF and US Air Force.

Col. Christopher Leonard, 48th Mission Support Group Commander, said:

Through outstanding teamwork and collaboration with our Defence Infrastructure Organisation mission partners, the 48th Fighter Wing is excited to start the demolition of existing facilities to clear the site for the F-35 campus.

This campus will be the home to the first two US Air Force F-35 squadrons in Europe, thus reassuring our commitment and enhancing interoperability with the RAF and our NATO allies.

We appreciate the Ministry of Defence and DIO's commitment and support of US Visiting Forces in the UK.

James Hinds, managing director of Aviation and Defence at Kier, commented:

The start of demolition is a major milestone at RAF Lakenheath. These works are vital in allowing us to prepare the site for construction on this prestigious Defence project from this summer.

This is a crucial piece of infrastructure for the RAF and US Air Force, and we look forward to continuing to work closely with the DIO and our local supply chain to deliver this.

Demolition work will make the site ready for the start of construction this summer. At the height of construction, it is expected that there will be up to 700 contractors on site. The investment will also provide wider benefits to the local economy with over 1,000 personnel and family members living at the base.

RAF Lakenheath plans to welcome the first of the new US F35s in 2021.