

[Press release: Legal aid to be reinstated for pre-tariff reviews](#)

The Parole Board welcomes the announcement from the Secretary of State that legal aid is to be reinstated for pre-tariff reviews for indeterminate sentence prisoners before the Parole Board. The Statutory Instrument bringing this work back into scope for legal aid was Laid before Parliament on 21 December 2017.

The Statutory Instrument [can be read here](#).

We will be looking at how best to support prisoners affected by this in respect to their individual circumstances.

[Press release: New steps to tackle illegal waste and fly-tipping announced](#)

New powers to tackle the serious problem of waste crime will be granted, and further action opened for consultation in a crack-down on illegal sites, Environment Minister Therese Coffey announced today following the recent launch of the 25 Year Environment Plan.

Waste crime cost the English economy more than £600m in 2015, including lost landfill tax revenues and clean-up costs, and creates severe problems for people who live or work nearby with odour, dust, litter, vermin, fly infestations, pollution and fires blighting lives. Waste criminals also undercut genuine businesses who dispose of waste responsibly.

New powers will therefore be introduced for the Environment Agency (EA) to lock the gates or block access to problem waste sites to prevent thousands of tonnes of waste illegally building up. The powers will also enable the EA to force operators to clear all the waste at a problem waste site, not just the illegal waste.

The government has also launched [a new consultation to tackle crime and poor performance in the waste sector](#). Proposals include raising the bar required to hold EA waste permits, and putting a stop to criminals hiding their illegal activities by requiring them to register low-risk waste operations which are currently exempt from the need to hold a permit.

The consultation proposes improving awareness amongst householders, so people

can check on the EA website to see if the recipient of their waste is licensed to take their waste, or their duty to pass waste to legitimate carriers.

It also suggests providing local authorities with the option of fining those whose waste ends up fly-tipped or illegally dumped rather than having to pursue them through the courts. Latest statistics show that some of the worst hit areas include London which saw over 360,000 fly-tipping incidents last year and the North West of England which saw 128,000 incidents in 2016/17.

Environment Minister Therese Coffey said:

Waste crime and fly-tipping blight our communities and spoil our countryside, and we need determined action to tackle it.

These new powers for the Environment Agency will curb the rise of waste sites that continue to operate outside the law.

But we must all take responsibility for our waste to make sure it does not end up in the hands of criminals who will wilfully dump it. Our new consultation looks more widely at the waste sector and we are keen to hear from industry and the public how we can improve performance, tackle illegality and protect our precious environment.

More than 850 new illegal waste sites were discovered by the EA in 2016-17. While an average of two illegal waste sites are shut down every day, they continue to create severe problems for local communities and business as well as posing a risk to key national infrastructure.

In 2013, for example, a fire at a waste site in Stockport resulted in the closure of the M60 motorway and three weeks of disruption to traffic, residents and businesses. By empowering the EA further, these measures will help prevent such disruption.

Household waste is also a problem and makes up nearly two thirds of fly-tipped waste. Currently local authorities can only prosecute householders in court but a new fixed penalty notice would be less costly to enforce for local authorities, and more proportionate for householders.

The government is clear however that new fixed penalty notices should not be abused simply as a means of raising money. Guidance on how the fines should be applied will therefore be issued to councils.

Emma Howard Boyd, Chair of the Environment Agency, said:

We take tough action against anyone involved in illegal waste

activity and last year, the Environment Agency >closed down two illegal waste sites every day. We welcome these new powers, which will enable our teams to block access to problem sites, preventing illegal waste building up and becoming even more serious.

This will allow us to take faster action against criminals and will make a real difference to communities, but >everyone has a role to play. We all need to check our waste is going to the right place and is handled by the right people.

The new powers for the EA to tackle problem waste sites will be introduced by spring 2018, subject to parliamentary approval. This follows a public consultation in which an overwhelming majority (90%) of respondents were in favour of allowing regulators to take physical steps, such as locking the gates to an illegal waste site, to prevent operators from accepting more illegally dumped waste and enabling the EA to require all the waste to be removed.

Notes:

- [The responses to the 2015 public consultation on increasing EAs powers is available online](#)
- Current rules are already clear that action against those who litter the streets and cause harm to their local communities must be fair and proportionate. We do not expect anti-social behaviour legislation, for example, to be used as a backdoor fine to penalise a householder for not closing a bin lid nor for putting a bin out for collection a few hours too early. In addition, the Government will work with WRAP and local authorities to review current guidance to make clear what can and cannot be charged for waste at HWRCs (including in respect of DIY waste) and the Government believes it should be free for residents to dispose of DIY household at a civil amenity site.
- The cost of waste crime to the English economy being over £600m in 2015 is from the Environmental Services Association 2017 report 'Rethinking waste crime'
- Householders can check on the EA website that a waste carrier is licensed to take their waste.
- [The government's 25 Year Environment Plan is available to read online](#)

[Press release: UK funded vaccines save Rohingya children from deadly diphtheria outbreak](#)

Four-year-old Anowar has beaten diphtheria thanks to the efforts of British medics in Kutupalong camp, Bangladesh. Picture: Russell Watkins/DFID

The UK has once again led the response to the Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh, by contributing to a vaccination programme which will protect more than 350,000 vulnerable Rohingya children from a deadly outbreak of diphtheria.

The vaccination campaign, which began in December, is due to run until February, has already ensured more than 315,000 children aged between six-weeks and 15-years-old, living in or near the world's biggest camp in Cox's Bazar, are protected.

Overcrowded camps in Cox's Bazar are a breeding ground for contagious diphtheria, with 100 new cases every day.

Since late 2017, there have been nearly 4,000 suspected cases and at least 31 deaths. More than half the deaths relate to children under the age of five.

Diphtheria is especially dangerous for children. It is fast spreading and fatal, causing extreme breathing difficulties, inflammation of the heart which can lead to heart failure, problems with the nervous system and fatal paralysis.

In tandem with the vaccination campaign, which is being carried out by UNICEF, the UK has also provided specialist expertise in the form of British doctors, nurses, paramedics and midwives, who are treating diphtheria patients.

Only three weeks after arriving in the camps, the skills of the 40-strong UK aid-funded Emergency Medical Team have made a significant difference and saved countless lives, including that of four-year-old Anowar.

He was referred to the treatment centre at 9am last Monday (January 8), in a weak and lethargic condition and displaying symptoms of diphtheria.

Anowar's symptoms were so severe; the clinicians decided that he needed diphtheria anti-toxin immediately in addition to a course of antibiotics. By 4pm that afternoon his health had improved significantly, and he was soon released to complete his treatment in the care of his relieved family. He is now doing well and looked healthier when he visited the treatment centre on Thursday 11 January for a check-up.

The intervention of the UK medics undoubtedly saved Anowar's life but it has also had a wider impact as clinicians were also able to treat his entire family with precautionary antibiotics, preventing them from going through the same suffering as Anowar.

The Rohingya have fled to Bangladesh from neighbouring Burma following persecution by its military. In November 2017, the International Development Secretary visited Cox's Bazar where she announced extra UK aid for the humanitarian crisis, ensuring more lives are not put at risk when international funding starts to run out in February 2018.

International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt said:

It is difficult to comprehend the depth of human suffering among the hundreds and thousands of Rohingya who have fled persecution in Burma. Many have sought refuge in Bangladesh, but their plight is far from over as diphtheria, an entirely preventable disease, is claiming the lives of those who thought they had finally reached safety.

British expertise and aid is saving lives in Cox's Bazar, preventing and treating this deadly infection, helping children like Anowar.

In today's world, no child should die from a preventable disease. The UK is giving hope and a chance to Rohingya families.

Notes for Editors:

1. DFID is funding £2million of the \$4.6 million cost (£3.4 million) required to vaccinate 351,458 children aged six-weeks to 15-years-old as part of the campaign.
2. The wider UNICEF vaccination campaign will also vaccinate 130,000 school children living in host communities near to the camps in Cox's Bazar.
3. Funding for this vaccination campaign has been provided from the response budget announced on 23rd October and 27th November 2017.
4. Medics have worked tirelessly to ensure the swift vaccination of those most at risk. To date 315,889 children have been reached.
5. DFID is working in partnership with the government of Bangladesh to ensure that children living in the camps and host communities are vaccinated against this deadly disease.
6. The UK's Emergency Medical Team (EMT) is a collaboration between DFID, the NHS, Public Health England, UK Med – a register of NHS volunteers ready to deploy to emergencies, Handicap International and the UK Fire and Rescue Service. This is the first deployment of the EMT since it was verified by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in December 2016. UK medical personnel have previously been deployed to respond to Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines in 2013 and the Nepal earthquake in 2015.
7. The deployment will be funded from DFID's Bangladesh humanitarian budget – up to £650,000 has been earmarked for the EMT.

8. Diphtheria is a bacterial infection. It most often causes infection of the upper respiratory tract. Diphtheria is most commonly spread from person to person through respiratory droplets (coughs and sneezes), or by direct contact with either respiratory secretions or infected skin lesions. Respiratory diphtheria usually occurs after an incubation period of 2-5 days. It causes life-threatening airway obstruction if untreated.
 9. The first suspected case of diphtheria was reported on 10 November at an MSF clinic in Cox's Bazar. The outbreak was confirmed through laboratory testing on 04 December 2017. As of 10/1, 3,868 suspected cases of diphtheria and 31 deaths have been reported.
 10. In response to the diphtheria outbreak in Cox's Bazaar, existing clinical facilities are being converted and scaled up. This is currently being led by Médecins Sans Frontières MSF and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). However IOM and other international NGOs are unable to manage the complex care needs of these patients, which is why they require the support of UK staff.
 11. IOM will provide the medical facilities for the deployment. World Health Organisation (WHO) will provide drugs. The UK's EMT will provide a specialised clinical team, clinical oversight, some key medical equipment not available in country, and accommodation and transport for staff.
 12. Following the request for international assistance by the World Health Organisation on 15 December, a UK EMT team travelled to Bangladesh to conduct an emergency assessment, and recommended the deployment of the EMT.
 13. Staff will be rotated out of Cox's Bazaar after three weeks. Staff will have a diphtheria booster injection before deployment and will then be at minimal risk of contracting the disease.
 14. The UK has currently contributed £59 million to the crisis since 25 August 2017.
 15. Free-to-use video content is [available to download here.](#)
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[News story: Tax-Free Childcare opens to children under 9](#)

In April 2017 HM Revenue and Customs started rolling out Tax-Free Childcare, which helps working parents with the cost of childcare with up to £2,000 of support per child per year, or £4,000 for disabled children.

Today, Tax-Free Childcare opens to parents whose youngest child is under 9, or who turns 9 today. The scheme will open to all remaining eligible families with children under 12 on 14 February 2018. This means all eligible parents will be able to apply for Tax-Free Childcare before the end of this financial year.

Parents, including the self-employed, can apply online for Tax-Free Childcare by visiting [Childcare Choices](#). Parents can also access the government's childcare calculator through Childcare Choices, which helps parents to choose which government childcare support is best for them.

Since opening the childcare service, through which parents apply for 30 hours free childcare and Tax-Free Childcare, more than 325,000 customers have successfully applied and are now using the service. Of these, more than 170,000 have a Tax-Free Childcare account.

[What's Tax-Free Childcare like?](#)

The government is giving more help with the cost of childcare to working parents than ever before. It introduced Tax-Free Childcare in April 2017, and has doubled the free childcare available to working parents of 3 and 4 year olds to 30 hours a week for families in England. In 2019/20 the government will be spending around £6bn on childcare support – a record amount of support.

[News story: Bids open to host annual Armed Forces Day National Event in 2019](#)

The military parade at the Armed Forces Day National Event 2017 in Liverpool.

In 2019, Armed Forces Day will celebrate eleven years of supporting our Armed Forces Community, from serving personnel and reserves to veterans, cadets and families.

The eleventh Armed Forces Day, on Saturday 29 June 2019, will be a chance for the British public to show their gratitude to the Armed Forces for their hard work and sacrifice, to keep us safe at home and abroad.

Defence Minister for the Lords, Earl Howe, said:

This is a fantastic opportunity for a town or city to be at the centrepiece of the nationwide celebration as events and celebrations take place up and down the country.

In recent years the Armed Forces Day National Event has been held right across the country, showing the spectrum of British society – from the nation's capitals like Edinburgh and Cardiff to Liverpool and coastal communities like Cleethorpes and Blackpool.

This year's event will be hosted by the historic North Wales seaside town of Llandudno. The hosts, Conwy Council, have a spectacular range of celebrations planned to show their gratitude to the Armed Forces community. Councillor Gareth Jones, Leader of Conwy County Borough Council, said:

We are proud and privileged to be named as the Host of the National Armed Forces Day in 2018.

Conwy County has a deep affiliation with the Armed Forces and a strong historical link. Llandudno will be a great destination to showcase the outstanding work of the Armed Forces past and present.

The event will be supported by all the North Wales Councils and key colleagues across Wales. Serving personnel and veterans of our Armed Forces Community will be assured of a very warm welcome and an event that thanks them for their commitment to keeping the country safe.

Anyone interested in becoming the 2019 host should contact the Ministry of Defence Armed Forces Day team for more information by email at armedforcesday-events@mod.uk or by telephone on 020 7807 0970. The deadline for applications to be considered as host is 15 March 2018.

More information about Armed Forces Day is available at armedforcesday.org.uk