

News story: £45m boost for young people with SEND

The Government today announced a package of support worth nearly £45 million to provide additional help for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Minister for Children and Families Robert Goodwill confirmed the additional funding for councils and organisations to continue transforming SEN provision and put families at the heart of the system.

The reforms which began in 2014 introduced Education, Health and Care plans which are tailored to the individual needs of the child or young person.

In addition to the funding to bolster the roll out of these reforms, a new £9.7million fund has been set up to create new supported internships, helping to bridge the gap for some of the most vulnerable young people between education and employment. The announcement has been welcomed by the National Children's Bureau

Minister for Children and Families Robert Goodwill said:

We have taken action to fundamentally reform support for children with special educational needs, making sure that families are at the heart of the process and care plans are tailored to individuals – and our survey of parents tells us that this has made a difference to so many of these families.

Councils are making encouraging progress, but there is still work to be done to fully embed this improved system across education, health and care sectors.

That's why I am pleased to announce this additional investment for councils and other groups who have been instrumental in getting us to this positive stage. Their hard work is raising the aspirations of these young people and giving them access to the same opportunities as their peers, helping them fulfill their full potential as adults.

The package of funding announced today includes:

- £29 million to support councils and their local partners to continue pressing ahead with implementation of the reforms to the SEND system;
- £9.7 million to establish local supported internship forums, which will create work placements for young people with SEND to provide them with

the skills and confidence they need to move into paid work. The funding could also be used to train job coaches, who are vital to the success of supporting those with learning difficulties into paid work; and

- £4.6 million for Parent Carer Forums, which bring parents together with local decision makers and help to provide them with a voice in the process.

Annamarie Hassall MBE, Director of Practice and Programmes at the National Children's Bureau, said:

The funding announced today will help more children with disabilities and special educational needs get the support they need to live normal lives in their home communities. In particular, we welcome funding for internships, which will provide young people with valuable work experience as they make the transition to adulthood.

The Minister also confirmed that further funding would be available to build capacity in the system and support the ongoing delivery of the SEND reforms over the next two years. Invitations to bid for these contracts, which will include providing families with access to information, advice and support, continuing support for the SEND workforce, and expert support to local areas, will be published online shortly.

[Press release: Yorkshire Water fined for raw sewage leak](#)

On 27 November 2017, Yorkshire Water Services Limited appeared at Sheffield Crown Court and pleaded guilty to charges relating to a water pollution incident in Doncaster which led to the deaths of several hundred fish.

They were fined £45,000 and ordered to pay Environment Agency costs of £24,762.56 as well as a victim surcharge of £120.

Proceedings were brought by the Environment Agency following the pollution incident in April 2014 where raw sewage was discharged from the defendant company's pumping station at Sandy Lane, Belle View in Doncaster, South Yorkshire into a water course and ultimately into 2 local ponds.

The discharge of sewage resulted in a raised level of ammonia in the water of the ponds and a reduced level of dissolved oxygen for a considerable period of time. The pollution from the illegal discharge was traced for over 3.5km

downstream from the pumping station and a large number of fish died due to the toxic effects of ammonia.

Yorkshire Water Services Limited operates the pumping station under an environmental permit, and is required to ensure the site operates correctly. There was a breach of conditions of the permit on this occasion which caused an unlawful discharge.

Richard Moore, Team Leader at the Environment Agency said:

Safeguarding the environment is an essential part of how all water companies must operate. The sentencing in this case shows we will continue to take companies to task where they fail to meet environmental standards.

Press release: Consultation on further safeguards on investigatory powers launched

The government has announced today that it is consulting on new safeguards for the use of communications data.

A [consultation](#), which will run for 7 weeks, is seeking views on amendments to the UK's communications data and acquisition regime in response to a judgment handed down by the Court of Justice of the European Union in December 2016.

The proposed changes will introduce additional safeguards to ensure communications data can continue to be used to keep people safe from crime and terrorism while complying with the judgment.

Launching the consultation, Security Minister, Ben Wallace said:

Communications data is used in the vast majority of serious and organised crime prosecutions and has been used in every major Security Service counter-terrorism investigation over the last decade. Its importance cannot be overstated.

For example, it is often the only way to identify paedophiles involved in online child abuse and can be used to identify where and when these horrendous crimes have taken place.

As this is an issue of public importance, we consider it important to consult on our proposed changes to inform our legislative

response and subsequent Parliamentary debate. All responses will be welcomed and carefully considered.

The new provisions include:

- the introduction of independent authorisation of communications data requests by a new body, known as the Office for Communications Data Authorisations, under the Investigatory Powers Commissioner Lord Justice Fulford
- restricting the use of communications data to investigations into serious crime
- additional safeguards which must be taken into account before a Data Retention Notice can be given to a telecommunications or postal operator
- clarification of the circumstances in which notification of those whose communications data has been accessed can occur
- mandatory guidance on the protection of retained data in line with European data protection standards

The communications data code of practice, which sets out how the safeguards governing the retention of communications data by telecommunications operators and its acquisition by public authorities will operate, is also being published today for consultation.

The government is clear that the December 2016 judgment does not apply to the retention or acquisition of data for national security purposes as national security is outside of the scope of EU law. Nevertheless, a number of the proposed changes will apply to certain national security applications for communications data to create a simpler, more practical regime.

Notes to editors:

Communications data is the 'who', 'where', 'when', 'how' and 'with whom' of a communication, but not what was written or said, and includes information such as the subscriber to a telephone service. It is an essential tool for the full range of law enforcement activity and national security investigations, for example to investigate crime, keep children safe, support or disprove alibis, and tie a suspect to a particular crime scene, amongst other things. It is used in 95 percent of serious and organised crime prosecution cases handled by the Crown Prosecution Service Organised Crime Division, and has been used in every major Security Service counter-terrorism investigation over the last decade.

The Investigatory Powers Act brings together and updates existing powers

while radically overhauling how they are authorised and overseen. There is more information on GOV.UK.

The consultation is open for responses now and will close on 18 January 2018. The government proposes amending the IPA by secondary legislation made under section 2(2) of the European Communities Act 1972.

We have also published relevant [case studies](#).

Press release: Managing hazardous materials advice for Astonfields businesses

The advice and guidance Environment Agency staff gave to businesses on the Astonfields Industrial Estate, Stafford, will ensure that local businesses manage their hazardous waste and materials to help prevent pollution in the future.

In this unannounced day of action, more than 50 businesses were visited and inspected by Environment Agency staff. The inspections checked a number of things, including how hazardous materials are stored, how they are disposed of, whether the site and its drains are maintained and if businesses know what to do if something did spill into surface water drains.

James Perry, from the Environment Agency's Hazardous Waste Team, explains why it's important to reduce the risk of pollution:

Hazardous materials used in industrial processes can be washed into the surface water drains by rain. These drains usually flow directly into a brook or a river which means hazardous materials can pollute the water, causing a problem for fish and other aquatic life. In serious cases, a pollution can also affect other businesses who use the water for their industrial processes or even affect drinking water.

By offering advice and guidance on measures businesses can take to reduce the risk of pollution, we're seeking to make sure the owners have robust processes in place to prevent a pollution and know what to do if something goes wrong. This is really important; at the Environment Agency we follow the 'polluter pays principle', so if something does happen, the company responsible will have to pay the costs of clean up and recovery.

The Marston Brook flows near the industrial estate and has suffered from low levels of pollution from materials washed into it from surface water drains for a number of years. It is hoped this day of action will reduce the level of pollution seen in the Marston Brook.

If anyone is concerned about the business practices at any site, or if there is a pollution in a river or brook, please contact the Environment Agency's 24/7 incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60.

Press release: Strategic Review of Charges Consultation Launched

The Environment Agency is launching a public consultation today (Thursday 30th November) on the cost of its permits and business charges. Regulating business costs the taxpayer money, but under proposals laid out in the Strategic Review of Charges, the burden on the public purse would be significantly reduced. The proposed changes will mean that businesses pay for the full services they use rather than the public – a more financially-sustainable model that will lead to long-term environmental improvements.

This the biggest review of charges that the Environment Agency has ever carried out, and has involved a 12 month period of engagement with businesses and trade associations. There have been very limited changes to business charges since 2011, with costs kept below inflation (CPI).

The proposals are for a simpler and more consistent charging arrangement. Our charges will reflect the amount of regulatory effort needed at a site. Businesses that are well-managed and low-hazard present a low environmental risk and would be charged less. Higher-risk or poor-performing businesses would be charged more.

If the new charges are implemented, the Environment Agency will also be able to invest more in our permitting service. This is vital to improve the standards of certain sectors, such as waste and nuclear industries.

Neil Davies, Environment Agency Director of Regulated Services, said:

Our work to regulate industry protects and enhances the environment. The proposed changes will mean that businesses pay for the full services they use rather than the public. This is more financially-sustainable, will lead to a better service to businesses and long-term improvements to the environment.

We have been engaging with trade associations over the last year while we were developing these proposals. Their input into this

process has been really valuable and I urge them to take part in the consultation.

The consultation will run until 12 January 2018, with the proposed charges being introduced in April 2018 – the start of the financial year. To have your say: click [here](#).