

# Press release: New Foreign Office booklet published on its historic ban on homosexuality

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has today published a new booklet which for the first time provides insight into one of the most controversial parts of its history – the ban on diplomats being homosexual which was only lifted in 1991.

The booklet reveals the human cost of the ban, detailing specific cases of individuals whose lives – professionally and personally – suffered. Based on recently discovered archive files, it includes the various historical definitions of “acceptable” and “unacceptable” homosexuality circulating among British diplomats; the pressure from campaign groups and the press on the Foreign Office to alter its policy; and the lengths to which officials went to identify and remove anyone suspected of defying the ban. The foreword has been written by Sir Stephen Wall, a former British Ambassador who concealed his homosexuality for his entire diplomatic career.

It also demonstrates how times have changed. Today the Foreign Office takes a prominent role in promoting equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people around the world and since 2014, British embassies and consulates have held marriages for over 400 British same sex couples in countries where such marriages are not recognised. The Foreign Office takes part in Pride celebrations around the world and there is a very active staff association (FLAGG). The Afterword to the booklet is written by John Kittmer, an openly gay diplomat and former British Ambassador to Greece.

By highlighting these contrasting times, the Foreign Office hopes to use its own experience to show how attitudes can change and use this to support the work of British diplomats around the world to promote tolerance and end discrimination.

James Southern of FCO Historians who wrote the publication said:

If we are to make today’s FCO a tolerant and open institution, then it is vital we understand its past. I hope this publication and event go some way to help all of us realise that we have a shared history and a shared responsibility to shape the present.

Simon McDonald, Head of the British Diplomatic Service said:

I am proud to lead an organisation with a diverse workforce which stands up for people persecuted around the world because of their sexuality. But it’s important we don’t hide the past and are honest about our mistakes. We changed our attitude to homosexuality, and

now set an example for others.

Lucy Monaghan of the Foreign Office's network for LGBT Staff, FLAGG, said:

This report shines a light on the history of the sexuality bar in the FCO and the significant struggles many LGBT officers experienced. We hope it will enable the FCO to learn from its history and continue to stand up for LGBT rights within the FCO and across the world.

The report is available online [here](#)

### **Further Information:**

Foreign Office staff who declare themselves as LGBT now represent the UK all around the world and at all grades. We have openly gay ambassadors in countries including Ukraine (Judith Gough), Israel (David Quarrey) and Thailand (Brian Davison).

Further information on the FCO Historians and their publications can be found [here](#) or on Twitter [@FCOHistorians](#).

FLAGG tweet the latest news about the FCO's work to promote LGBT equality on twitter [@FCOflagg](#)

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## **[News story: Primary school tests show schools rising to the challenge](#)**

Results published today (4 July 2017) show that the percentage of children achieving the expected standard in primary school has risen

The national Key Stage 2 results show that 61% of primary school children in England achieved the expected standard, compared to 53% last year.

This year's [results](#) are the second to be released following the introduction of a more rigorous curriculum in September 2014 that raises the bar in terms of expectations of young people's mastery of literacy and numeracy, bringing the primary school curriculum in line with the best in the world.

### **Today's results show**

- 61% of pupils met the expected standard in reading, writing and

mathematics, compared to 53% last year

- 71% of pupils met the expected standard in reading, compared to 66% last year
- 75% of pupils met the expected standard in mathematics, compared to 70% last year
- 77% of pupils met the expected standard in grammar, punctuation and spelling, compared to 73% last year
- 76% of pupils met the expected standard in writing, compared to 74% last year

School Standards Minister Nick Gibb said:

Today's results show sustained progress in reading, writing and maths and are a testament to the hard work of teachers and pupils across England. Thanks to their commitment and our new knowledge rich curriculum, thousands more children will arrive at secondary school having mastered the fundamentals of reading, writing and maths, giving them the best start in life.

The new national curriculum and reformed qualifications – at primary and at secondary – are designed to ensure pupils receive the education that they need to go as far as their talents will take them.

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## **[News story: Legal regulators issue guidance on immigration and asylum issues](#)**

OISC works with the SRA and BSB to issues guidance for the public and professionals on immigration and asylum issues

Consumers of immigration and asylum legal services are often a particularly vulnerable group. They may have limited knowledge of their rights, the law and legal process, and can struggle to navigate a complex immigration and asylum system. These consumers can face significant barriers to accessing

legal services, including inconsistent client care, the provision of poor quality advice and a lack of choice and/or accessible information, including clear information about fees.

The Bar Standards Board (BSB) in collaboration with the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) and the OISC has developed guidance for both public and professionals following extensive consultation with consumer organisations and consumers themselves. Two documents have been published, the first guidance is aimed directly at consumers of immigration legal services. The second is for professionals working with people with immigration and asylum issues, to help them better assist their clients to navigate the legal system.

A link to the BSB guidance is found [here](#)

Anyone providing immigration advice and services to the public in the course of a business (whether or not for profit) must be registered with the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC), or be a lawyer regulated by a “qualifying regulator”. It is a criminal offence to provide advice and services to the public without being registered with the OISC, or regulated by a “qualifying regulator”.

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## **[Press release: £2.3 billion investment in infrastructure for new housing](#)**

A £2.3 billion fund which could unlock 100,000 new homes in areas of high demand has been launched today (4 July 2017) by the Communities Secretary, Sajid Javid.

Speaking in Birmingham at the LGA Conference today, the Communities Secretary will say that the investment will help to fund vital physical infrastructure projects like the building of roads, bridges, energy networks and other utilities, the absence of which continues to hold housebuilding back.

The new investment through the [Housing Infrastructure Fund](#) (HIF) aims to solve this problem and today opens for bids for local authorities across England to come forward with proposals to help get homes built faster.

Funding will also be available to help build new schools, healthcare centres and digital infrastructure to accommodate growing communities and alleviate pressure on public services.

Once proposals have been approved, it is expected that local authorities would begin building the necessary infrastructure immediately and for the homes to follow quickly afterwards.

HIF is part of the government's wider £23 billion National Productivity Investment Fund, which targets spending on areas critical to boosting productivity, including on housing, transport and digital communications.

Communities Secretary, Sajid Javid, said:

To build the homes this country needs, we need to deliver the right infrastructure in the right place at the right time.

By investing in local infrastructure, we can help unlock building thousands of new homes in the areas where they are needed most.

The Housing Infrastructure Fund will also make sure we have better public services in place for local communities.

Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury, Andrew Jones said:

Where we live plays a huge part in our lives; from the distance of our commute to the local facilities available. By ensuring we have enough housing in areas where it is needed the most, we can boost productivity and support new communities to grow and thrive.

This money is part of our £23 billion National Productivity and Investment Fund, which will ensure Britain is match fit for the future.

LGA Chairman, Lord Porter said:

We're pleased that the government has followed through on its commitment to invest in infrastructure linked to housing and that this to be led by councils, as we outlined on our preliminary Housing Commission findings last year.

Going forward, what's crucial is that the arrangements to access this fund are flexible, especially around different housing tenures, and that all councils can access funds to deliver housing for their communities.

Councils know their communities, and the places in them, best and so it's right that approaches to invest in local infrastructure are led by local authorities.

Home Builders Federation Planning Director Andrew Whitaker said:

Funding necessary infrastructure will give local authorities the opportunity to remove barriers to developments being delivered.

Direct support for critical infrastructure will not only unlock more housing, it should also help to accelerate planned developments.

Local authorities that plan for growth should be supported and that will, in turn, allow house builders to get on and deliver the homes our communities so desperately need.

HIF is an important demonstration of the government's commitment to housing, following on from the [housing white paper](#), which sets out a strategy to fix the nation's dysfunctional housing market.

The fund will support councils to step up their plans for growth, release more land for housing and get attractive, well designed homes that people want to live in built at pace and scale.

£2.3 billion of capital grant funding will be allocated to local authorities on a competitive basis. The funding will be available from 2017-18 to 2020-21.

DCLG will work closely with other departments in the assessment of local authority bids.

HIF forms part of the new £23 billion National Productivity Investment Fund, as announced at the Autumn Statement 2016.

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## [News story: Miniature pump for failing heart to be trialled with 50 patients](#)

[Calon Cardio-Technology](#) is preparing the UK's first artificial heart pump for a 50-patient clinical trial in 2018.

The pioneering medical technology spin-out from [Swansea University](#), based in the [Institute of Life Science 2](#), has developed a miniaturised ventricular assist device (VAD) to be implanted directly into the left ventricle of a failing heart. This follows support from Finance Wales and Innovate UK.

### **Dramatic impact on the quality of life**

Up to 60,000 new cases of advanced chronic heart failure are diagnosed every year in the UK, and 40% of those diagnosed die within 12 months.

Calon Cardio's MiniVAD assists the weakened heart rather than replacing it. It could have a dramatic impact on quality of life for a significant number of patients.

It can slow or stall heart failure progression and prolong the life of patients waiting for a heart transplant. The MiniVAD is driven by an embedded electric motor and is powered by a battery pack worn by the user.

## **Smaller, lighter and more cost-effective**

Existing VADs on the market are expensive, require extensive surgery for implantation and have been known to cause complications by damaging proteins and cells in the blood.

The MiniVAD addresses these problems with a smaller, lighter pump that requires less invasive surgery and causes less damage to the blood by allowing it to flow more gently. This also means it is more cost effective.

Innovate UK awarded Calon Cardio and Swansea University a Biomedical Catalyst grant of £1.66 million in 2013, to gather the necessary performance and safety data before applying to begin human clinical studies.

## **Substantial benefits to patients**

Stuart McConchie, Chief Executive of Calon Cardio, said it was the most-advanced pump of its kind, adding:

This is for a very sick group of people and there are millions of them in the world, and hundreds of thousands in the UK.

It is the first British pump to be built for this purpose: to treat blood which is flowing through the pump extremely gently and to minimise damage to the blood.

Patients don't have return to hospital for correction of adverse events related to blood handling, so the absolute cost benefit becomes substantial.