

Stoke-on-Trent man receives increased sentence for historical child sex offences

News story

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Christopher Appleby, now 56, abused three girls over a period of 15 years between 1999 and 2014. He was convicted of 12 counts of serious sexual offences, including five counts of rape and attempted rape.

On 15 October 2021, Appleby was sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment, followed by 5 years on licence, at Stoke on Trent Crown Court. He was also handed an Indefinite Sexual Harm Prevention Order.

Following the sentencing, the Solicitor General, Alex Chalk QC MP, referred Appleby's sentence to the Court of Appeal under the Unduly Lenient Sentence (ULS) scheme.

On 9 December, the Court of Appeal found his original sentence to be unduly lenient and increased it to 21 years' imprisonment followed by 5 years on licence.

Speaking after the hearing, the Solicitor General, Alex Chalk QC MP said:

It is never too late for justice to be served and Appleby's actions were despicable. I am glad the Court of Appeal saw fit to increase his sentence today and I hope it brings some comfort to the brave victims.

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[Record numbers accept a place to study nursing and midwifery](#)

Record numbers of students accepted places to study nursing and midwifery in England this year for the second year running, according to the latest data on university admissions published by the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS).

The final figures from this year's admission cycle show there were 30,185 acceptances. This is an increase of 1.5% (445) compared to last year when there were 29,740 acceptances.

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care Sajid Javid said:

It is fantastic to see so many people taking the first steps toward rewarding careers in nursing and midwifery, with record numbers accepting places to study for two years running. I have no doubt the efforts of healthcare staff during the pandemic have inspired a new generation, who will help secure the future of our health and care services.

We are on track to deliver 50,000 more nurses by the end of this Parliament and we're supporting all eligible nursing and midwifery students with £5,000 a year. I urge anyone who wants an enriching career in the NHS to apply next year.

Ruth May, England's Chief Nursing Officer said:

Our amazing staff have shown throughout the pandemic what a brilliant job they do and the public recognises now, more than ever, what a vital role nurses, midwives and other health care workers play.

Being a nurse is a career like no other and I could not recommend it more – there are many different opportunities available in the

NHS that are both challenging and rewarding, so please do search NHS careers if you are interested in joining us.

Professor Mark Radford, Chief Nurse, Health Education England said:

Reaching 30,000 acceptances onto nursing courses is a major milestone and I'm delighted to see last year's huge increase has been maintained.

It has been another tough year for the NHS but we have continued to work extremely hard to attract a diverse range of people to this rewarding career.

The pandemic has shone a spotlight on the vital contributions of our nurses and I am hugely proud of their commitment in these challenging times.

The government is investing hundreds of millions of pounds in additional funding for the NHS workforce, which will help train some of the biggest undergraduate intakes of medical students and nurses.

It also recently announced that Health Education England would be merged with NHS England, ensuring long term planning and strategy for healthcare staff is at the centre of the national NHS agenda.

In September 2020 the government introduced training grants for eligible nursing, midwifery and many allied health profession students of at least £5,000 a year, which do not need to be paid back. Additional payments of up to £3,000 a year available for students studying certain specialisms and to help with childcare.

Background

- This year is the highest combined nursing and midwifery total since these statistics were first recorded.
- The UCAS data dashboard is published [here](#).

[UK agrees world's most comprehensive digital trade deal with Singapore](#)

- International Trade Secretary secures agreement in principle on a digital trade deal with Singapore
- The Digital Economy Agreement – the world's most comprehensive digital trade agreement – will capitalise on our strengths as the world's second

largest services exporter and leading digital hub

- More opportunities for UK firms to target advanced, tech savvy and rapidly expanding markets in Asia

The UK has today (Thursday, December 9) secured an agreement in principle with Singapore for a Digital Economy Agreement (DEA) that will cut costs, slash red tape and pave the way for a new era of trade.

It is the first digitally-focused trade agreement ever signed by a European nation. This comprehensive digital trade deal was agreed in record time by International Trade Secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan and Singapore Minister-in-charge of Trade Relations S. Iswaran after just six months of negotiations.

The DEA will take our trading relationship with Singapore – worth £16 billion in 2020 – to the next level by overhauling outdated trade rules that affect both goods and services exporters, making it easier for UK business to target new opportunities in both Singapore and lucrative Asian markets.

A third of our exports to Singapore are already digitally delivered, including in finance, advertising and engineering, and this deal will create new opportunities to expand digital trade. Services companies will be the big winners, from financial and telecoms giants like Standard Chartered or BT Group to software companies like Wales-based Awen Collective.

The deal will boost a sector that adds £151 billion to the economy and lifts wages, with workers in the digital economy earning around 50% more than the UK average. UK-founded tech unicorns are being created at a rate of almost one a week, and more will now be able to follow in the footsteps of British companies like Revolut, Darktrace and Checkout.com, which are already thriving in Singapore.

Goods exporters will also benefit from streamlining cumbersome border processes. Time-consuming and costly paperwork can be replaced with e-signatures, e-contracts and electronic invoicing with greater confidence.

Singapore is a gateway to the wider Indo-Pacific region and the DEA will support our bid to join Singapore and 10 other nations in the Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). Membership would mean access to a £8.4 trillion free trade area with vast opportunities for UK business.

International Trade Secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan said:

This cutting-edge agreement with Singapore links two of the world's most dynamic hi-tech hubs and plays to our strengths as pioneers in digital trade. Negotiated in just six months, it is the first digital trade deal ever signed by a European nation and will slash red tape, cut costs and support well-paid jobs across the whole UK.

Digital trade is creating a new global economy, but it is still largely governed by old-fashioned rules that pre-date the digital revolution of the past 20 years. We're using our independent trade policy to strike ground-breaking agreements that update these rules

for the digital age and connect UK businesses to the biggest and fastest growing markets in the world.

The DEA is the latest and most ambitious digital trade win following new agreements with Japan, Australia and New Zealand that all contain advanced digital chapters. Under the UK's Presidency, G7 countries agreed on ground-breaking Digital Trade Principles in October, which will help to modernise trade and spread the benefits of technology more widely.

The Singapore DEA will overhaul trade rules, so they are tailored to UK business. Wide-ranging benefits include better data flows, stronger cybersecurity and closer links between two hi-tech and services hubs.

- Data flows are essential for providing services digitally: in 2019, 86% of the UK's global financial services exports were digitally delivered, as were 84% of our global exports of telecommunications, computer and information services. The deal promotes personal data protection, and locks in free and trusted cross-border data flows, enabling everything from more efficient manufacturing and supply chains to more reliable infrastructure and effective maintenance of jet engines. UK companies will not have to pay for expensive data storage and processing in Singapore to do business there.
- The deal establishes a new partnership with Singapore to build ever-stronger cybersecurity defences against attacks by private operators or hostile states, which are a growing threat to individuals and businesses. Companies like Coventry's CyberOwl and Caerphilly-based Awen Collective have set up in Singapore and are poised to be at the forefront of protecting critical national infrastructure and businesses against cyber risks, fraud, money laundering, terrorism funding and organised crime.
- The DEA links two of the world's most dynamic hi-tech and services hubs, opening up a 6,000-mile trade superhighway between the UK and Asia. Building on the success of the UK-Singapore Fintech Bridge, it will enable future growth sectors like fintech and lawtech to benefit from deep cooperation with another advanced economy, cementing the UK's position as a world leader in these fields.

Andy Burwell, CBI Director, International, said:

It's extremely promising to see the UK agree its first-ever digital trade deal with Singapore. This deal will help to unlock digital trade and support key industries of the future, driving forward the UK's global competitiveness, jobs and growth.

Services will underpin the UK's economic growth and therefore the

UK's Global Britain ambitions. Enabling digital exports in its broadest sense, and importantly the free flow of data, is integral. This agreement is only the starting point for what can be achieved through global collaboration on digital.

Julian David, CEO, techUK, said:

We welcome the Digital Economy Agreement with Singapore, which comes at the end of a successful year for UK's leadership in this space, with UK-Japan CEPA, agreements in principle with Australia and New Zealand, as well as the G7 Digital Trade Principles.

Given Singapore's longstanding status as one of the most innovative countries in digital trade policy, this agreement provides a strong platform for meaningful bilateral cooperation on tech and digital, allowing us to build common approaches to emerging issues. This is exciting news for the tech sector and the broader services economy and techUK looks forward to helping bring this agreement to life.

Clare Francis, Regional Head, Client Coverage Europe, Standard Chartered, said:

The United Kingdom continues to show its leadership in global trade by becoming the first European country to agree to a Digital Economy Agreement with Singapore. A modern digital trade agreement will help facilitate growth in trade for digital services as well as support digital platforms that make global trade in goods faster, more transparent and secure.

Standard Chartered has financed trade between the United Kingdom and Singapore for over 160 years and we continue to see great potential in strengthening this historic and strategic relationship even further through helping businesses trade using digital technology.

[HMS Queen Elizabeth returns home as historic global deployment comes to an end](#)

HMS Queen Elizabeth's crew are being welcomed back to their home base of Portsmouth after sailing 49,000 nautical miles to the Indo-Pacific and back.

HMS Kent will join her tomorrow.

3,700 personnel from nine ships, a submarine, five air squadrons and a company of Royal Marines will arrive home in time for Christmas having departed the UK in early May.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

Today we pay tribute to the 3,700 personnel in the Carrier Strike Group that have been our global ambassadors on this historic and ground-breaking deployment.

The personnel and their families have made considerable sacrifices to make this deployment the success it has been. We thank them for all their efforts in strengthening our relationships with our allies and partners around the world.

Families and friends gathered in Portsmouth to meet their loved ones. Those deployed will transit straight home where they will take a PCR test and quarantine until they receive the result. 25 of those deployed on CSG21 met their babies who were born in the last seven months for the first time today.

Chief of the Defence Staff Admiral Sir Tony Radakin said:

Throughout the past seven months HMS Queen Elizabeth and her Strike Group have been furthering the UK's interests and strengthening our partnerships around the globe. With involvement from across the Armed Forces, and our allies integrated throughout, this deployment has been a truly joint, truly international endeavour, which represents the very best of Global Britain.

I thank everyone involved for their efforts to make this deployment such a resounding success, and I wish our returning sailors, aviators, soldiers and marines a very happy reunion with their families this Christmas.

Earlier this week, the Carrier Air Wing departed the group after clocking up 4,723 flying hours. The Air Wing consisted of UK F-35 jets from 617 (The Dambusters) Sqn based at RAF Marham, Wildcat helicopters from RNAS Yeovilton and Merlin helicopters from RNAS Culdrose.

US Marine Corps F-35 jets from VMFA-211 departed CSG21 in late November. United States' Destroyer USS The Sullivans returned to her base port of Jacksonville, Florida in time for Thanksgiving last month and Dutch Frigate Evertsen recently returned to her home base of Den Helder.

Many families and friends greeted frigate HMS Richmond who arrived in Plymouth today, meanwhile HMS Defender and HMS Diamond returned to Portsmouth.

The Carrier Strike Group sailed across three oceans and five seas, cumulatively covering around 500,000 nautical miles. The group has engaged with 44 countries, strengthening partnerships with allies including Australia, Canada, New Zealand, France, Greece, Israel, India, Italy, Japan, Oman and the Republic of Korea.

The most significant peacetime deployment in a quarter of a century, Carrier Strike Group 21 has been more than just a military endeavour, bringing together elements of defence, diplomacy and prosperity and flying the flag for Global Britain.