

Pilot areas for offensive weapons homicide reviews announced

London, West Midlands and Wales will be the first regions to trial a collaborative new approach to prevent future deaths involving offensive weapons, such as knives and guns.

Local authorities within London, West Midlands and Wales will pilot a new law being introduced in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill that requires local government, police and public health bodies to review the circumstances of certain homicides where the victim was aged 18 or over, and the events surrounding their death were likely to have involved the use of an offensive weapon.

Offensive weapons homicide reviews aim to provide a more holistic understanding of particular offensive weapons homicides in order to help inform preventative actions to save lives in the future. The purpose will be to identify the lessons to be learnt from a death, to consider whether any action should be taken as a result, and to share the outcomes.

As set out in the government's [Beating Crime Plan](#), at the heart of our strategy to reduce homicide, serious violence and neighbourhood crime are targeted interventions to address places, people, and criminal enterprises.

Co-designing and piloting the reviews first with partners in London, West Midlands and Wales, will ensure the reviews are as effective as possible in implementing change that saves lives.

The pilot locations were chosen to provide insight from places with differing levels of homicide and serious violence in both England and Wales. They are intended to run for 18 months.

The duty to arrange and conduct offensive weapons homicide reviews will be enshrined in law through [the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill](#), currently in its passage through Parliament.

Homicide reviews already take place in a number of circumstances – including when a child dies, a vulnerable adult dies, or when the death occurs in a domestic setting. If a death would be subject to such another review, there will not be a need to conduct a separate offensive weapons homicide review, so as to avoid duplication.

Government launches consultation on Road Collision Investigation Branch

A new investigation branch dedicated to learning lessons from road traffic collisions, including those involving self-driving vehicles, could be established under plans being unveiled by the government today (28 October 2021).

The Department for Transport (DfT) has launched a [consultation on proposals to set up a Road Collision Investigation Branch \(RCIB\)](#), which would operate much like the similar independent bodies that already exist for air, maritime and rail accidents.

An RCIB would carry out thematic investigations and probe specific incidents of concern to establish the causes of collisions and make independent safety recommendations to help further improve road safety across the country.

The consultation is being launched now due to the huge developments which are taking place across the transport sector, such as the rollout of increasingly automated and electric vehicles.

Roads Minister Baroness Vere said:

The UK's roads are among the safest in the world, but we're always looking at ways to make them even safer.

A new investigation branch would play a huge role in this work by identifying the underlying causes of road traffic collisions, so we can take action to prevent them from happening again.

It would also provide us with vital insight as we continue to modernise our road network to ensure better, greener and safer journeys.

Director of the RAC Foundation Steve Gooding said:

After excellent progress across many years, sustained road safety improvement has been hard to achieve over the past decade, both in the UK and further afield.

We should be challenging ourselves on whether we are understanding all we can about the causes of road collisions and what could be done to prevent them – our research to date suggests that more could be learnt – which is why today's consultation is so important and so welcome.

The consultation, which has been published on GOV.UK, will run until 9 December 2021.

Independent bodies are longstanding features of accident investigation practice in the UK. The [Air Accidents Investigation Branch \(AAIB\)](#) has been operating since 1915, while the [Marine Accident Investigation Branch \(MAIB\)](#) and [Rail Accident Investigation Branch \(RAIB\)](#) have operated since 1989 and 2005 respectively.

[Largest funding increase in more than a decade for justice system](#)

- Extra £2.2 billion in Spending Review to drive recovery in courts, prisons and probation
- £550 million to cut reoffending and protect the public
- £185 million a year to boost victim support services

A 12 percent boost to the department's budget will see £11.5 billion invested by the end of this parliament, delivering commitments to cut crime and build back confidence in justice – with an extra £2.2 billion to aid recovery in the courts, prisons and probation services.

An extra £550 million will be invested over the next 3 years to rehabilitate offenders and protect the public – getting ex-prisoners into work and keeping them off the streets to tackle the root causes of crime.

The money will help accelerate the extensive work already underway to recover from the unprecedented impact of the pandemic, while delivering a more efficient and modern justice system.

More than £1 billion has been allocated to boost capacity and accelerate post-pandemic recovery. This includes £477 million that has been secured to help deliver the swift access to justice that victims deserve – improving waiting times and reducing court backlogs.

Crucially, victim support services will see £185 million in annual funding by 2024-25. This will fund more than 1,000 Independent Sexual and Domestic Violence Advisors and 24/7 crisis helplines and is an 85% increase on funding in 2019/20.

In addition, £3.5 billion will fund the MOJ's commitment to create 18,000 additional prison places – the biggest prison-building programme in more than a century. A further £250 million will fund an extra 2,000 temporary prison places.

Justice Secretary and Deputy Prime Minister Dominic Raab MP said:

The pandemic created unprecedented challenges but this settlement is the largest increase in more than a decade for the justice system. That means we can focus on building a better, more efficient, justice system for all.

The extra investment will help us protect the public by bringing criminals to justice quicker, reducing stubborn reoffending rates and supporting victims better than ever before.

The settlement includes a further £324 million over the next 3 years to improve timeliness in civil and family courts and tribunals. £200 million will complete the flagship £1.3 billion court-reform programme, fulfilling our commitment to a justice system that takes advantage of technology and moves more court processes to quicker and safer online platforms.

The Spending Review will also boost access to justice for millions by expanding the eligibility thresholds for legal aid in civil cases – such as deciding child maintenance arrangements. The MOJ will set out plans for criminal legal aid following the ongoing independent review which is due to report back soon.

[Regulator finds misconduct and mismanagement as statutory inquiry into Human Appeal concludes](#)

Press release

The Charity Commission's statutory inquiry into Human Appeal has found failures in the charity's governance.



[Human Appeal](#) was set up for the prevention or relief of poverty or financial hardship anywhere in the world. The charity's stated work includes providing

emergency and relief programmes overseas.

The statutory inquiry was opened after the Commission became aware of a number of regulatory concerns including that a warehouse belonging to the charity in Syria had been temporarily seized by a proscribed terrorist organisation, and that three of the charity's trucks had been stopped in Syria and held for several hours by an armed group – neither of these incidents had been reported in a timely manner to the Commission or to other relevant authorities. The charity's then auditors had also raised concerns over compliance with local tax laws in Turkey where the charity operated.

This inquiry identified a number of failures by the then trustees and executive including not complying with the charity's own policies regarding reporting the incidents in Syria, failing to undertake adequate due diligence on some significant donations and partners, and failing to ensure compliance with local tax laws in Greece. The inquiry also established that the trustees failed in their legal duty to file statutory returns with the Commission by the required deadline.

The inquiry concluded that there had been misconduct and/or mismanagement in the administration of the charity by its then trustees and identified that a significant factor in the misconduct and/or mismanagement was insufficient oversight of the charity's executive by the then trustees.

Steve Roake, Head of Compliance Visits and Inspections at the Charity Commission, said:

Good governance is not a bureaucratic detail – it underpins the delivery of a charity's purposes to the high standards expected by the public.

Our inquiry found that the then trustees of Human Appeal did not have the oversight needed regarding the activities of their charity.

While trustees of larger charities will delegate certain tasks to staff members, we and the law are clear that trustees retain ultimate responsibility for running their charity. and our guidance is clear that trustees must ensure that robust reporting procedures are in place. Responsibility for ensuring they have sufficient information and are adequately informed to make decisions rests with the charity trustees.

The report acknowledges that during the inquiry, the current trustees have made significant improvements to the governance of the charity. This includes changes in key personnel in both the trustee board and the executive, and other improvements in governance.

Read the [full report of the inquiry into Human Appeal](#).

Ends

Notes to Editors:

1. The Charity Commission is the independent, non-ministerial government department that registers and regulates charities in England and Wales. Its purpose is to ensure charity can thrive and inspire trust so that people can improve lives and strengthen society.

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Two unknown soldiers of the Great War honoured for their sacrifice

A burial service for two unknown soldiers who lost their lives during World War One was held on Tuesday 26 October 2021, at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's (CWGC) Perth Cemetery (China Wall) near Ypres, Belgium.

The service was organised by the MOD's Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC) Commemorations Team, also known as the 'MOD War Detectives'.

The service was attended by representatives of The Royal Anglian Regiment who were honoured to carry out this duty, although there was little evidence of these two soldiers having any association with them.

Despite extensive research carried out by the JCCC, neither of these men could be identified and they were buried as unknown soldiers of unknown regiments.

Louise Dorr, JCCC said:

"It is always incredibly sad when we have to bury British soldiers without being able to return their names to them. Sadly, in this case, these two men were found with nothing that gave us any clues as to who they might have been. Although we couldn't name them and tell their families, they have been buried with full military honours from their Army family and the UK Ministry of Defence."

The service was conducted by the Reverend Gary Birch CF, Chaplain to 1st Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment.

The Reverend (Major) Gary Birch CF said:

"We choose names for our children carefully and many of us really don't like it when someone gets our name wrong. Therefore, when so many in this place, including the two we lay to rest today, do not have a name, it is important

that we gather to pay our respects and honour them in this way, despite not knowing who they were”.

The graves and headstones of both soldiers were prepared by the CWGC who will now care for them in perpetuity.

Liz Woodfield, CWGC Director of External Relations, said:

“Although it has not been possible to identify these casualties by name, we are honoured to lay them to rest alongside their comrades at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission’s Perth Cemetery (China Wall). We proudly mark their graves, ensuring that their service and sacrifice will not be forgotten.”