

Biometrics and Forensics Ethics Group appoints three new members

News story

Three additional experts take up positions on the ethics group.



Getty images

The Biometrics and Forensics Ethics group are pleased to announce the recruitment of three new members. The new members come from diverse backgrounds, with expertise across policing, digital forensics, and ethics.

Mark Watson-Gandy, Chair of the BFEG, said:

I am delighted to welcome two new members to the Biometrics and Forensics Ethics Group, who will strengthen our expertise in Policing and Digital Forensics matters. I am also so pleased to be able to welcome back Professor Nina Hallowell, a former BFEG member, who made such excellent contributions to the BFEG during her previous terms.

The three new members are:

- David Lewis – retired Deputy Chief Constable of Dorset and Devon & Cornwall Police. Mr Lewis was also the National Police Chiefs' Council lead for Ethics and national lead for Forensics Performance and Standards.
- Dr Sarah Morris – Senior Lecturer and Head of the Digital Investigation Unit Centre for Electronic Warfare Information and Cyber (EWIC) at Cranfield University.
- Professor Nina Hallowell, Professor of Social and Ethical Aspects of Genomics, at University of Oxford. Nina was formerly a BFEG member between 2011 and July 2020.

The new members joined the Biometrics and Forensics Ethics Group at the group's plenary meeting on 20 October 2021.

Published 21 October 2021

[Inspection Report Published: Second Annual Inspection of 'Adults at risk in immigration detention'](#)

News story

Following Stephen Shaw's 2016 and 2018 reviews of the welfare in detention of vulnerable persons, the then Home Secretary commissioned the Chief Inspector to report on "whether and how the Adults at Risk policy is making a difference". This is the second of those reports.



Upon the publication by the Home Office of ICIBI's report on its Second Annual Inspection of 'Adults at risk in immigration detention', Independent Chief Inspector [David Neal](#) said:

I welcome the publication of the Second Annual Inspection of 'Adults at Risk in immigration detention'. Following on from [ICIBI's first report](#) on the functioning of the Home Office's Adults at Risk policy, published in April 2020, this inspection explored the efficacy of the mechanisms in place to identify and safeguard vulnerable people in detention.

The challenge of operating an effective 'Adults at risk in immigration detention' policy was inevitably exacerbated over the past 18 months by the Covid-19 pandemic, which posed a particular threat to vulnerable people. While the Home Office and its

suppliers managed this challenge well within the immigration detention estate, the population of time-served Foreign National Offenders held in prisons under immigration powers grew significantly over the period of the pandemic. It remains a concern that these individuals have less access to the safeguards offered under the Adults at Risk policy than their counterparts in Immigration Removal Centres and are therefore less likely to be identified and managed as vulnerable.

This inspection found that work to address shortcomings in the Home Office's policy and procedures for identifying and safeguarding vulnerable detainees was moving at an unacceptably slow pace. Though seven of the eight recommendations made in ICIBI's first annual inspection were accepted in full or in part, none of these had been closed by January 2021. Known flaws with the Adults at Risk policy itself remained unaddressed, with work on these issues on hold while new legislation makes its way through Parliament. Though awareness of vulnerability issues among Home Office staff has grown considerably in recent years, a perception within the department that Adults at Risk safeguards are widely abused engenders suspicion towards claims of vulnerability. Robust evidence to substantiate this perception was lacking, and concerns about abuse of safeguards at times appeared to serve as a justification for slow, poor-quality caseworking. An atmosphere of suspicion towards claimants is particularly dangerous when dealing with some of the most vulnerable individuals in our society. This danger is compounded when at the tactical level of the delivery of control measures to protect them is uneven and at the strategic level previously identified gaps are left unaddressed.

This inspection has resulted in eleven recommendations, some of which are timebound. Responding to Home Office feedback, I made the recommendations narrower, more directed and more deliverable than those arising from the first annual inspection. It is therefore disappointing to see the Home Office take a piecemeal approach to engaging with the recommendations, with only two accepted in full, and seven partially accepted, watering down both the spirit and the intended consequences of the recommendations.

I have met many committed staff working in this area who care deeply and understand that the quality of their decision-making impacts directly on the lives of some incredibly vulnerable people. Equally, I have encountered mediocre casework and systemic delays which I will continue to call out.

Foreign Secretary Statement on Hong Kong Councillors

Government response

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss issued a statement today (21 October) on the disqualification of District Councillors in Hong Kong.



Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said:

It is deeply concerning that 55 District Councillors have been disqualified and over 250 pressured to resign for political reasons – the first time that such action has been taken against democratically elected District Councillors in the Hong Kong SAR. This comes as trade unions, interest groups and NGOs have been forced to disband.

The Hong Kong SAR Government must uphold freedom of speech and allow the public a genuine choice of political representatives.

Published 21 October 2021

Open letter to the Prime Minister from Social Mobility Commissioners

Three years ago, we were appointed as a different kind of commission – diverse, non-political, first-time public appointees drawn from all walks of life and all areas of the UK. Since that appointment, our research has broken new ground, deepening knowledge of geographical inequalities, showing how

social class and background can hold people back in the workplace, and demonstrating that the choices people make are circumscribed by the impacts of economic status and place. And yet despite these structural challenges we believe we have also begun to show a positive way forward, building networks of influence beyond the Westminster bubble, working directly with employers, and engaging with local leaders across all parts of the country.

But the fundamental truth of social mobility remains stark. Without a more equal society, we cannot build a mobile society. And Britain today is far from equal.

We recognise the many ways in which your government has aligned itself with our findings and our mission. The idea of 'levelling up' the country – of removing the geographical and social impediments that cause Britain to be so unequal – is laudable, and is marked by your acceding to our request that social mobility be put at the heart of government, and not seen as just a matter for education. We welcome the appointment of a new Chair and commissioners, and trust that they will build on the foundations we have laid.

Because our work can only be a foundation. To address social mobility is to play the long game – to look at effects over decades, not parliamentary cycles.

As such, our last piece of work may prove to be our most important. As the new Chair and deputy Chair have said in their first public pronouncements, the ways we measure social mobility are challenging, and the first [Social mobility index](#) produced by the previous commission back in 2017 was at times crude. We have therefore developed a new piece of work which looks forward, setting benchmarks for progress over the next five years, the next ten years, the next thirty years. We hand this work over to the new commission to use as a tool – because if we do not have continuity and cooperation in our fight against inequality, if we cannot hold ourselves to account on a consistent set of metrics over a number of years, and if we cannot resist switching course when the political wind changes, we will get nowhere.

But we need to move fast. We write now at clearly the most critical time in living memory. The pandemic will have an enormous impact for decades to come. People have lost their jobs, their loved ones, their way of life. With the ending of furlough, benefit changes and a cost of living crisis there are more difficulties ahead. But there is now a huge opportunity to rebuild people's lives. Trains, bridges and roads are important but people, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, should not be overlooked. They need skills, training, opportunity, support and hope, wherever they live.

We believe the work we have done can provide a framework for how to tackle this. Our [practical guidance to employers](#) showing why they should and how they can recruit and retain a more socially diverse workforce has been adopted by organisations up and down the country. Our last [State of the nation](#) report provided a comprehensive, evidence-led post pandemic recovery programme. And our other reports, based on world class research, have

included dozens of practical recommendations to close attainment gaps at all levels from birth to work and address geographical inequalities. Ministers, educators and employers now need to act on them.

Our recommendations and research fall into three broad categories – Geography, Education and Employment.

Geography

The Commission's research shows clearly that geographical inequality is not just about north and south. Our landmark report [The long shadow of deprivation](#) highlighted the importance of looking at inequalities both between regions and within them. It identified a true postcode lottery, with those from disadvantaged backgrounds with the same level of education often having very different earnings even when living in neighbouring areas. It's clear that education is not the only answer. Local labour markets matter too.

A separate study, [Moving out to move on](#), showed how important it is to build up local employment opportunities and training in relevant skills to ensure moving to London or big cities (a choice not open to all) is not the only way to get better opportunities. We have repeatedly made the case for greater powers for metro-mayors and other local leaders and we welcome signs from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on this. We are pleased with the focus on geography in the incoming deputy Chair's Policy Exchange piece as many of the comments mirror proposals we have made during our term as commissioners.

Education

One of our key, consistent recommendations from our body of educational research is for a student premium for those aged 16-19 to mirror the pupil premium given to primary and secondary students. It is also vital that further education funding is equalised with school funding. The current Commission launched a further education college and we have set out recommendations on adult skills in numerous reports, and we hope that the appointment of a college leader in the next commission indicates the prioritisation of this sector. But warm words need to be matched with concrete plans.

Across the wider education picture, a better funded, more comprehensive catch-up programme to help students who lost out on learning during the pandemic (as proposed by many bodies, ranging from the Education Policy Institute, to the Association for School and College Leaders, to the government's own recovery commissioner Sir Kevan Collins) is essential. Early signs show the attainment gap has already widened during the pandemic. And while we must begin a return to normal service in education, the risk is that when grading is brought down next summer, it is those who have experienced the most disruption from coronavirus that will be left high and dry unless we act now.

Crucially, the fact that the Social Mobility Commission (SMC) has recently moved to the Cabinet Office should not mean that social mobility is

overlooked within the Department for Education. It is critical that social mobility continues to be a core objective for the Department and that projects like the Opportunity Areas can continue.

Employers and business

We have developed key tools and advice to help employers recruit a more socially diverse workforce. Crucially we focussed on identifying the one most important question for employers to ask to measure socioeconomic background. Masterclasses, round tables and other events have followed creating a domino effect as thousands of employers start adopting our proposals.

It still pays to be privileged in Britain and career progression for those from disadvantaged backgrounds can often be restricted even if they do get the job. Our ground-breaking report [Navigating the labyrinth: Socio-economic background and career progression within the Civil Service](#), showed how few people from working-class backgrounds make it to senior levels. Other reports, addressing the bottom end of the pay scale, have looked at adult training and the progression from low pay.

We are delighted at the focus from the new Chair and deputy on social mobility for all – but if we ignore the huge gaps in representation at the top, we run the risk of embedding inequality for the next generation. Who wields power matters.

The way forward

In the immediate term we must not forget that attainment gaps occur from birth and therefore it is vital that the poorest families are given the best support possible. With furlough ending and the £20 uplift in Universal credit taken away, many families in poverty are finding it hard to get by. We urge you and the Chancellor to look at our recent proposals to help struggling families. We believe the cost must be levied on those who can most afford to pay, and we urge HM Treasury to consider the recommendations of tax experts on how to reform the tax system to enable rather than hinder social mobility.

Looking further, we hope that our revised framework for assessing social mobility, looking at new measures such as housing, wealth, employment and regional disparities, will be taken up by the new Chair. The importance of data to measure and track progress cannot be underestimated. Other areas of work, nearly completed, which we pass on include a study on digital inequalities and research into the link between poor health and social mobility.

But this handover isn't just about the work. It is about the ethos of the Commission. We hand over a brightly burning torch with a sense of pride of what we have achieved over the last three years. As a group of commissioners we are drawn from across regions, different generations and ethnicities and we are acutely aware of the challenges you face when you are working class. But as our research has shown, time and time again, it is fruitless to pit different groups against each other, or focus on one characteristic at the expense of another. We need to look holistically and dispassionately at the

hard facts of inequality, without bending them to emotional narratives that might feel politically useful but that run the risk of sewing discord and division.

We wish the next Chair and her commissioners well and hope they will build on this programme, making it even stronger through their own experiences. We hope you and your ministers will help drive this through. But it is for others to do so too. Teachers, employers, business leaders, metro mayors and council leaders need to play their part. Only together can we make a difference.

Signed

Saeed Atcha

Steven Cooper

Alastair Da Costa

Pippa Dunn

Sam Friedman

Harvey Matthewson

Jessica Oghenegweke

Farrah Storr

Sandra Wallace

Jody Walker

Liz Williams

Sammy Wright

[UK and partners join Palestinian farmers in olive harvesting](#)

Heads of Mission and representatives from Belgium, the EU, France, Italy, Norway, Sweden, and the UK visited Qusra village in Nablus district. They took part in the olive harvest, which began this month and which has significant cultural and economic importance for Palestinians. The visit was organised by the British Consulate in coordination with the local community.

Participants heard from locals about settler violence in the Nablus district,

which has affected Qusra village for several years and which tends to spike during the Olive Harvest season. In the discussion, participants reiterated their continued opposition to Israel's settlement policy and concern over the increased settlers' violence. They recalled how Israel, as the occupying power, is obliged under international law to protect the Palestinian population from attacks, to maintain public order in an impartial manner and to protect Palestinians and their property.

British Consul General Diane Corner said: "It is very special to participate in the Olive Harvest, but it is disheartening to hear about persisting settler violence throughout the start of the season. Settlers who are responsible for crimes against Palestinians must be held to account and incidents should be thoroughly investigated by the Israeli authorities, who should take all necessary measures to protect Palestinians against such violence."

From his side, the European Union Representative Sven Kühn Von Burgsdorff added: "Olive trees in Palestine are not just a source of income; they are part of the Palestinian cultural and national identity. Most of the olive trees are located in Area C of the West Bank where Palestinian farmers are facing frequent attacks by Israeli settlers. These attacks are unacceptable and perpetrators should be brought to justice by the Israeli authorities. The EU will continue its support to the Palestinian farmers, and particularly in Area C. This is in line with our known political objective of supporting the two state solution and maintaining the Palestinian presence in Area C which is and remains an integral part of the occupied Palestinian territory."

During the visit, UN OCHA briefed the diplomats on recent settler attacks against Palestinians across the West Bank and in the Nablus area in particular. The number of incidents of settler violence resulting in Palestinian casualties has risen year-on-year since 2016.

According to UN OCHA, nearly half of cultivated Palestinian agricultural land in the West Bank is planted with 10 million olive trees. Between 80,000 and 100,000 families in the West Bank rely on olive oil for primary or secondary sources of income.

Since 2014, the British Consulate General in Jerusalem and likeminded missions have supported over 180 Palestinian communities, including through the provision of harvesting materials and by providing a protective and supporting presence during harvesting. This year, the British Consulate will continue to offer support through providing a protective presence during the olive harvest at three selected location, focusing particularly on Palestinian communities who have limited access to their lands, or who face the threat of demolition or settler violence.