

Birbalsingh to be appointed as chair of Social Mobility Commission

- Michaela Community School Headmistress, Katharine Birbalsingh, preferred candidate for role of Chair of the Social Mobility Commission
- Chief Executive of Oldham College, Alun Francis, to be named deputy with recruitment underway for a range of new Commissioners
- Priorities will be addressing regional disparities, improving evidence base and holding government to account

The appointment of Ms Birbalsingh will see a renewed focus from the Commission on areas such as regional disparities, employment, education and enterprise.

Ms Birbalsingh brings a wealth of experience to the role from the UK's education sector as the founder and headmistress of Michaela Community School, a free school which was established in London in 2014. The success of Michaela, including its positive impact on ethnic minority children and the track record it has on social mobility, were all part of the reason that Ms Birbalsingh was considered the best candidate for the role.

In the 2020 Queen's Birthday Honours Ms Birbalsingh was appointed Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) for services to education.

Minister for Women and Equalities, Liz Truss, said:

"This country has incredible potential and to unleash it we must harness the talent of all our people, regardless of background or where they live. I want Katharine to focus on education, enterprise and employment so we can level-up opportunity across Britain and give everyone the chance to succeed.

"By expecting high standards and not indulging the soft bigotry of low expectations she is producing amazing results at Michaela school and giving children the best chance in life. She will bring that same attitude to the Commission and be a loud champion of equality of opportunity.

"I am focused on closing the education gap, employment gap and enterprise gap across Britain and am working closely with Cabinet colleagues to do that. Our equality work will address the worries that keep people up at night – like having a good job and getting their child a good education – not tokenistic issues divorced from their everyday concerns."

Katharine Birbalsingh CBE, Headmistress of Michaela High School, said:

"As we recover from the pandemic, this is the moment to develop a culture in our society which provides an equal chance for all.

"From education, to early years in the home and onto the world of work, improving social mobility is more vital than ever, and I look forward to taking up this important role.

“My immediate priorities will include developing a sound evidence base from which change can flow. On the one hand, I want to inspire real action that will encourage people to seize the opportunities available to them, and on the other, I want to ensure that the government and other public bodies are delivering on their commitments to providing such opportunities, so that we really can ‘level up’ every region of the UK.”

Alongside the appointment of Ms Birbalsingh, the Minister for Women & Equalities’ is also announcing her intention to appoint Alun Francis as a Commissioner and the Deputy Chair of the SMC. Mr Francis is currently the Principal and Chief Executive of Oldham College where he has overseen its transition into a focal point for the local community. Prior to that he served as Director of Transforming Learning, leading Oldham Council’s Building Schools for the Future Programme from 2007-2010.

Alun Francis, Principal & Chief Executive of Oldham College, said:

“We have a unique opportunity to reshape social mobility policy, so that it retains a focus on promoting merit and high achievement, but delivers a wider variety of opportunities, for a wider variety of people, in a wider variety of places.

“Our remit will cover education, employment and enterprise and I am looking forward to working with Katharine and the Social Mobility Commission to champion this agenda. We bring different experiences and skills, but we have a common purpose and are determined to help bring real benefits to people and places across the country.”

The new leadership team of the SMC will make the case for social mobility within and outside of government, oversee work to strengthen the evidence base upon which policy decisions are made and improve public understanding of how opportunity is created and made accessible to all.

Before taking up the new role Ms Birbalsingh will give evidence at a pre-appointment scrutiny session of the Women and Equalities Select Committee; it is anticipated that this will take place in the coming weeks.

The selection of a new Chair will be followed by a public appointments campaign to appoint new Commissioners later in the autumn. The campaign will ensure that there is a strong functioning board as the tenures of all current Commissioners end in late October.

[Private security and emergency services come together for safety](#)

exercise at London's Cuckoo Club

The SIA is running the exercise in partnership with the Metropolitan Police Service, Profile Protection Security Services Ltd, West End Security Group, Safer Business Group, the Princess Royal's Volunteer Corps, Inspirations Theatre Company, and The Cuckoo Club itself.

The training event at The Cuckoo Club comprises a series of real-time simulations involving actors and volunteers of possible emergency scenarios. These are:

- mass stabbing (gang related knife attack)
- invacuation (external marauding terrorist attack)
- corrosive attack (using the three Rs remove, remove remove)
- suspect package

This event will strengthen the resilience of the venue. Cuckoo Club staff and Profile Protection Security Services Ltd (the security provider) will also benefit from completing the brand-new [Action Counters Terrorism \(ACT\) Security e-learning](#).

Paul Fullwood, the SIA's Director of Inspections and Enforcement, said:

The private security industry has an important role in protecting the public. Security operatives can often be the first on the scene in an incident. This exercise at The Cuckoo Club will provide a learning environment for door supervisors and nightclub staff to respond to a set of simulated exercises with the support of the emergency services.

He added that:

The common goal of all of the partners is ensuring that going to a London nightclub is as safe as possible for customers and those working at the venue.

The objective of this exercise is to enhance public safety in the night-time economy by working with venues and security staff.

It is also to showcase best practice (so, putting the Action Counters Terrorism (ACT) Security e-learning package into practice), to demonstrate partnership working within the community and to run a series of exercises in a real-time environment.

This emergency planning exercise at The Cuckoo Club continues a programme of exercises and follows on from the last event in Chesterfield on 21 September. A pilot event took place in Buxton, Derbyshire in October 2019 but the

programme of exercises was disrupted due to the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak.

The new Action Counters Terrorism (ACT) Security e-learning is specialised training for front line security operatives. This free course was designed by government counter-terrorism experts from the National Counter Terrorism Security Office, the Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure and the SIA. The custom-built training provides up-to date counter-terrorism knowledge to help security professionals prepare for and respond to terrorist incidents whilst on duty.

Further information:

- Invacuation: an invacuation or lockdown, occurs when circumstances dictate that people's safety is better ensured by them being kept inside the building with the doors and windows locked and the blinds/shutters closed. People should be moved away from the windows and doors for prime safety.
- The Security Industry Authority is the organisation responsible for regulating the private security industry in the United Kingdom, reporting to the Home Secretary under the terms of the [Private Security Industry Act 2001](#). The SIA's main duties are: the compulsory licensing of individuals undertaking designated activities; managing the voluntary Approved Contractor Scheme.
- For further information about the Security Industry Authority visit www.gov.uk/sia. The SIA is also on [Facebook](#) (Security Industry Authority) and [Twitter](#) (SIAuk).

[Education Secretary addresses NAHT Conference](#)

Good morning and thank you Paul for those kind words.

I am delighted to have been appointed Education Secretary by the Prime Minister.

To me, this office is the most important in Government. Every day that I am able to work with you to help our children and young people is a privilege and a huge responsibility.

So I would like to take this opportunity to thank the National Association of Headteachers and Paul, in particular, for your work during and before this pandemic.

I'd also like to say thank you to all of you, in this room, or watching remotely, for everything you have done throughout the disruption. You have

gone above and beyond to support children, families and communities in the most challenging of circumstances.

I know that some of these challenges continue. But you have never stopped helping your staff deliver an excellent education that gives young people the tools they'll need to get on in life.

Thank you.

I know better than most how much difference your work can make. I was born in Baghdad in 1967 and fled with my family from Saddam Hussein's regime in the decade after.

Had we stayed, I have no doubt that I would have been sent to fight on the frontline in the 1980s Iran-Iraq War. Instead, we came to this country.

I'm not going to stand before you and say it was easy... I couldn't speak English! In any other country, I might have been left behind, forgotten about, my future vanishing before I'd even finished school.

But here, in this country, my teachers never gave up on me.

Every day, they challenged me to do better and supported me along the way, so that I was able to make the best of the opportunities in front of me.

That is my story.

There are children in classrooms today who will grow up with their own tales to tell, and I want to work with you to make sure that these stories end in opportunity, not a closed door.

You may be teaching a future Education Secretary, I want them to have the same opportunity that I enjoyed.

I will listen to you and work with you to make sure we do right by children and learners.

And I will also be honest with you.

This will not always be an easy journey for us, I know that leadership can be a lonely place at times.

There will have been sleepless nights, worrying about the children in your schools... I know all about sleepless nights, having just worked as Vaccines Minister.

It is a different set of challenges that I am focused on now, though.

You won't be surprised to know that as a former Children and Families Minister for me, that starts in the earliest years of a child's life. And I can tell you that we are committed to improving services in those first, critical 1001 days, championing family hubs, and helping parents provide the best home-learning environment for their children.

This is so important because high-quality education at this stage can really boost children's outcomes later in life, and that's particularly true for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

One of the reasons that I was able to succeed at school as an 11 year old without English, is because as well as fantastic teachers, I had parents at home who were always urging me on and who understood the value of education. That makes a world of difference.

It's not a given, though, and I feel very strongly that I have a responsibility to stand up for every child, especially those who may not have the same advantages I did.

What does this mean in practice?

It means my job... our job... and I don't just mean government here, I'm including you too!... is to ensure every child, from whatever background, has the opportunity to realise their potential.

Our job is to continue to make our schools the very best in the world, with the very best teachers.

And to get the very best teachers, we need to make sure they get the very best training. Which is why we have delivered the Early Career Framework and why we are rolling out a suite of National Professional Qualifications – supporting teachers and leaders right across the country as part of a fundamental overhaul of how we train teachers. This country will be looked up to around the world as one of the best places a teacher can learn and master their craft.

Our job is to make sure that we have a skilled and agile workforce, who can help us power through the aftermath of the pandemic.

So that means no easing up on our plans to ensure any child who fell behind during the pandemic makes up their lost learning, as we build on the recovery programmes already in place.

Programmes like tutoring... One-to-one tutoring is no longer going to be something that the children of wealthy parents can fall back on, but the right of every child. And we'll be seeing around one hundred million hours... one hundred million hours... of tutoring in this parliament.

I spoke about some of these issues at our annual conference earlier this week but I'm mindful that not everyone will have been following all the conference speeches to the letter...

So let me confirm that we'll also be bringing forward a Schools White Paper to ensure we have brilliant teachers at every stage; high standards in every classroom and strong schools with excellent leaders and robust systems.

We must end illiteracy and innumeracy and make sure that no child leaves primary school unable to read or without a grasp of mathematics, and then we'll continue a relentless focus on literacy and numeracy throughout

secondary school.

We'll also be making sure our excellent teachers get the recognition they deserve. The Prime Minister announced in his Conference address on Wednesday that those who are in the early years of their careers will be eligible for salary boosts of up to £3,000 tax-free to teach maths, physics, chemistry and computing.

This will boost the number of teachers in subjects that are facing the greatest shortfall. It will also build on our groundbreaking teacher recruitment and retention reforms.

We have already started to transform how young people gain the skills they need for a meaningful and satisfying job with our T level and apprenticeship programmes. I want these to be just as highly thought of, just as famous, as A levels. They have put employers in the driving seat and will mean more highly-skilled people join the workforce which is going to help kickstart the economy and bring down unemployment.

But perhaps one of the most crucial commitments, certainly as far as I'm concerned, is that we do far more for vulnerable children and make sure they have the support they need to succeed.

For me, this is about children with SEND, or those who are looked after, getting as many opportunities as their peers.

It is about acknowledging that we must close the disadvantage gap and do the best by every single child by focusing on the outcomes for every single child.

And that means mental health must be better understood and support provided where it's needed. I want us to put wellbeing at the centre of everything we do in schools alongside a drive for rigorous standards and high performance.

But of course we can't do this if children are not at school, so another key priority for me will be getting to the root of what is causing children to be persistently absent and then tackling it head on. Because the children who lose out the most from not being in school are likely to be the ones who can cope least, the vulnerable, the disadvantaged... You can't help them if they aren't there.

I will be tireless in pursuing all these issues, to deliver a world-class education for all children, because it is the only way we can escape the quicksand of disadvantage.

For all these reasons, we will continue to invest record sums in our children's education.

I am not going to provide a running commentary on the spending review but I want to make one thing absolutely clear, I will not stop making the case for investing in children and young people.

These are my priorities and this is what I want us to deliver for the next

generation.

And if the challenge is 'how'? My answer is 'people'.

The answer is 'you'... the headteachers and leaders, working with us to give children the best education possible.

Let us summon the same spirit of determination that you showed in responding to Covid, and rise together to this challenge, so we can leave a legacy that endures for decades to come.

Thank you.

[Research to boost astronaut health for future space missions](#)

The research, which uses the low gravity (microgravity) environment of the International Space Station and other facilities that provide similar conditions to space, could also potentially benefit people who suffer from conditions such as muscle degeneration or back pain.

It is well known that the effects of space travel take a toll on the bodies of astronauts, whilst in microgravity their weight-bearing bones lose on average 1 per cent to 1.5 per cent of mineral density per month.

To counteract this, they currently need to exercise for two-and-a-half hours every day, take nutrient supplements, and consume high-protein diets to maintain muscle mass while in space. Without these interventions, astronauts could experience up to a 20 per cent loss of muscle mass on spaceflights lasting between 5 and 11 days.

The five new projects, set to receive a share of £440,000 of UK Space Agency funding, will support much longer space missions needed to explore the Moon and further afield. They include an initiative from Manchester Metropolitan University to study the prolonged effects of isolation on physical and psychological health, and a research project from Northumbria University to investigate the relationship between microgravity and spinal health.

Science Minister George Freeman said:

Our space science is about cutting-edge life science as well as rocketry and satellites: the UK is at the heart of state-of-the-art biomedical monitoring, providing huge potential insights into human health. For example, the way astronauts' eyesight deteriorates in space and then repairs back on earth could provide powerful insights to help researchers at labs like Moorfields to understand

eye health and potential new treatments.

This research could allow astronauts to safely embark on longer and more challenging missions, for the benefit of us all.

British ESA astronaut Tim Peake said:

It's exciting to see this cutting-edge research taking place here in the UK.

We can learn so much about the human body from spaceflight, especially the ageing process. This research could enable astronauts to carry out longer missions and explore further into space, whilst benefiting everyone on Earth.

Credit: Nick Caplan

The government recently launched its [National Space Strategy](#) which outlines its long-term plans to grow the UK space sector and make Britain a science and technology superpower, including building on manufacturing and technology capacity, attracting investment and working internationally.

This announcement comes during [World Space Week](#), which runs from 4 to 10 October. The annual event, led by the United Nations, celebrates the contribution of science and technology to improving lives on Earth. This year's theme is Women in Space.

Through the UK's membership of the European Space Agency's (ESA) exploration programme, UK researchers have access to unique facilities including parabolic flights that reproduce gravity-free conditions in an aircraft and drop towers that produce a controlled period of weightlessness.

Elodie Viau, Head of ESA's ECSAT site at the Harwell Space Cluster in Oxfordshire, said:

As we venture further into space, we are proud to see the UK's ESA membership help UK scientists conduct pioneering research to support these efforts.

These projects are set to deliver a variety of benefits for people's health, which could be applied to both ESA astronauts and people on Earth.

In March this year ESA launched its first drive for new astronauts in 11 years, with more than 22,000 people applying, including nearly 2,000 from the UK. ESA is looking for up to six astronauts and up to 20 reservists, with the successful applicants to be announced next year.

The UK Space Agency has also provided £16,000 funding for Kew Gardens to explore how seeds might be stored and transported in space to support human exploration to Mars and beyond. The Agency is supporting the preparation and testing of 24 seed species before they fly to the International Space Station in a few years' time.

[Northumbria University](#)

Northumbria University, Newcastle, will explore how spinal health is affected by spending six months in microgravity on the International Space Station, whilst researching effective ways to improve post-flight spinal reconditioning for astronauts.

The research team will also investigate the effectiveness of artificial gravity, supplemented by resistive vibration exercise, in preventing loss of spinal health using long duration bedrest to simulate the effects of microgravity. The findings of this study will be beneficial to the health and recovery of astronauts travelling to the Moon and Mars.

[University of Liverpool](#)

Astronauts rapidly lose skeletal muscle when they are exposed to microgravity. There is some evidence that this muscle loss is an accelerated form of the slow loss that occurs as we all age and contributes to frailty, weakness, and lack of independence in the elderly. The University of Liverpool will conduct a preliminary ground-based study to see if the chemical hydrogen peroxide, which is produced within the muscle by organelles called mitochondria, is a mediator of muscle ageing and loss of muscle following exposure to microgravity.

[Manchester Metropolitan University](#)

Manchester Metropolitan University will research the effects of prolonged isolation. Focusing on the SIRIUS confinement studies, a unique, Earth-based multi-compartment facility providing isolation, confinement, and remote conditions in exploration scenarios. The team will investigate the psychological stress, team function, performance, and health caused by extended isolation.

[University of Birmingham](#)

Space flight-Associated Neuro-ocular Syndrome (SANS) is a condition that can have severe consequences for astronaut health. The syndrome can cause various side effects from visual loss due to changes in the optic nerve, headaches as well as acute and chronic changes to the brain. This project will investigate methods for early diagnosis and monitoring through to establishing a drug treatment using GLP-1 receptor agonists to alleviate SANS and the associated long-term consequences.

[University of Birmingham](#)

When astronauts return to Earth, they are at increased risk of cervical

intervertebral disc (IVD) herniation which can cause significant pain, weakness and numbness. The University of Birmingham will study the causes that contribute to this increased risk of cervical IVD herniation using state-of-the-art methodologies to measure muscle behaviour. Such knowledge will provide the basis for future interventions aiming to reduce such risk.

[Statement on roundtable between the Business Secretary and energy intensive industry representatives](#)

News story

Statement from BEIS on roundtable discussions between the Business Secretary and representatives from energy intensive industries



Today the Business & Energy Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng met with representatives from energy intensive industries, such as steel, cement and chemicals, to discuss high global gas prices as part of his ongoing engagement with industry.

Mr Kwarteng began the call by saying he wanted to hear directly from industry leaders about the impact high global prices were having on their businesses and wider supply chains.

The Business Secretary stressed that the government remained confident in the security of gas supply this winter. He also highlighted the £2 billion package of support that has been made available to industry since 2013 to help reduce electricity costs.

The Business Secretary noted he was determined to secure a competitive future for our energy intensive industries, and promised to continue to work closely with companies over the coming days to further understand and help mitigate the impacts of any cost increases faced by businesses.

Today's attendees included:

- Business Secretary, Kwasi Kwarteng
- The Energy Intensive Users Group, which includes members from: The Mineral Products Association, The Confederation of Paper Industries, Make UK, British Ceramic Confederation, BritGlass, Glass Futures, BOC, Chemical Industries Association, Air Products, UK Steel,

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