

[Launching our prison education review](#)

Five years have passed since [Dame Sally Coates' independent review of education in prisons was published](#). The review made the case for putting education at the very heart of the prison regime, and for making prison governors both accountable for and able to choose the education that best serves their prisoners' needs.

Since that landmark review, little improvement has been made in the quality of prison education. Although there are small pockets of excellent practice, the overall quality of prison education remains extremely poor. Over the last 5 years, around 60% of prisons have been graded inadequate or requires improvement for education, skills and work. This compares with just 20% of provision in other parts of the further education landscape that we inspect, as we reported in our [latest Annual Report](#).

The pandemic has undoubtedly made the situation worse. Most prisons have been in a [system of lockdowns](#) for the majority of the pandemic. Indeed, almost two fifths of prisoners responding to [HMIP's survey](#) between late July and December said that they were in their cell for more than 23 hours a day. Most prisoners used the short time they were allowed out of their cell for exercise, phone calls, showers and other domestic tasks. No classroom education took place for at least 5 months. While it is now allowed in many prisons, it remains limited.

In this commentary, we report on what has been happening to adult education in prisons during the pandemic. The evidence is from 25 remote interim visits to adult prisons that took place between January and May 2021 and 10 in-person progress monitoring visits that took place between 17 May and 31 July. All but one of the progress monitoring visits were to prisons graded requires improvement or inadequate for education, skills and work.

The visits paint a stark picture of what remote education looks like in prisons. In most cases, it is limited to giving prisoners in-cell work packs with little opportunity to talk to or receive help and regular feedback from teachers. This has had a negative impact on most prisoners, and many are struggling to read and requiring closer support.

The pandemic has also affected vocational education. Closures of workshops and other places of work and training have significantly limited prisoners' ability to develop vocational and employment skills and their enjoyment of practical activities. Information, advice and guidance (IAG) services have been disrupted, which has hindered prisoners' progress towards finding work after release.

Sadly, prison education is in a very poor state. It is time to give it the attention it deserves. As a result of what we have found, we are setting up a review into prison education over the next year. This will start with a focus on reading in prisons as we return to full inspection in September. We will look at how reading is taught in prisons, how it is assessed and what

progress prisoners make.

The place of education in prisons

It is well documented that prison education serves some of the most educationally disadvantaged in our society. The [Prisoner Learning Alliance has reported](#) that, on entering custody, 47% of prisoners have no formal qualifications. The [Ministry of Justice \(MoJ\) also reports that](#) 42% have previously been expelled or permanently excluded from school. Prisoners have much lower levels of literacy than the general population. The [most recent data](#) published by the MoJ shows that 57% of adult prisoners taking initial assessments had literacy levels below that expected of an 11-year-old.

In a welcome development since Dame Sally Coates' report, prison education providers now screen all prisoners that want to participate in education courses for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The most recent data shows that around 30% of those assessed were confirmed to have SEND. More broadly, it has [been estimated](#) that up to half of prisoners have some form of neurodivergent condition that would require additional support, which was also [reported by the Prison Reform Trust](#).

[Research has shown](#) that taking part in learning is more important than qualifications in terms of reducing reoffending. Given the poor educational experience many prisoners have had earlier in life, it is essential that education within prisons is of a high quality. Prisoners' education needs to avoid bringing back memories of past educational 'problems'. It should help them build confidence and a sense of achievement. Teachers and those around prisoners need to inspire them in their subject or vocation and motivate them to learn.

Whatever society believes a prison's core purpose is – a rehabilitative journey, a deterrent to prevent crime or simply a form of punishment – it is an opportunity to turn lives around through education. There is much [evidence to show that prison education can increase the chance of employment](#) on release and reduces the likelihood of reoffending.

The challenges of remote teaching in prisons

Yet, while keeping schools and colleges open during COVID-19 has become a priority, education in prisons has not. In March 2020, classroom education in prisons stopped and teachers were not allowed into prisons, following [Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service \(HMPSS\) guidance](#). Teachers were not able to return for at least 4 months and then only to provide limited one-to-one support. Classroom education largely did not resume for much longer.

In response, prison education providers adapted their courses for remote delivery. Paper-based educational packs, designed for learners to complete in their cells, were gradually introduced. Initially, these were produced for maths and English, though the range of subjects they covered increased over time, including for theoretical elements of vocational courses. However, in some prisons, there was no face-to-face education for 6 months after the

first national lockdown started in March 2020. This means that some prisoners had little to no education until September 2020.

In addition, often the packs were not targeted to prisoners' specific educational needs. In [a survey carried out by HMIP](#), less than half of prisoners who had received an in-cell education pack said that they found them helpful. This may be due in part to the limited opportunities for prisoners to receive feedback and support. Some prisoners waited several weeks to receive written feedback. This was because it took time for prison staff to collect packs, send them to teachers and return them to prisoners, as well as quarantining the packs between each stage. While this process happened, prisoners had no educational materials.

Opportunities to use technology for in-cell learning have also been missed. Most prisoners have access to a telephone on their wing or, less frequently, in their cells. When they were not able to enter prisons, some teachers made regular telephone calls to talk through written feedback they had provided on prisoners' packs. Some education providers set up a phone hotline for educational support, but learners were not always aware this service was available. In at least one prison, prisoners communicated with their teachers by writing letters.

During our progress monitoring visits, we observed that some prisons have begun reintroducing face-to-face education, and more prisoners are now receiving support from teachers. However, the number of learners able to attend vocational workshops and classrooms remains limited. This means that education is still primarily being delivered through in-cell packs.

The importance of face-to-face teaching in prisons

Ofsted has [previously commented](#) on the challenges of delivering remote education in schools and colleges during COVID-19, particularly to those with SEND. These learners often require close supervision and support in lessons, particularly with reading. This is not possible to provide remotely without the very close involvement of parents or carers.

Given the large number of prisoners with suspected SEND, and prisoners' reading levels being similar to those of primary-age children, it is highly likely that remote education is not suitable for prisoners in the same way as for pupils with SEND. Arguably, it is less suitable, given the much lower levels of interaction that teachers have with prisoners compared with pupils in schools and colleges.

Until recently, tutors provided face-to-face support much less frequently than before the pandemic. During our visits, we heard how the lack of face-to-face teaching had affected prisoners. Some prisoners told us that, without a tutor to help them while completing the packs, they had to 'turn the page' if they came across something they struggled with. They found this a frustrating and demotivating experience. However, some more advanced learners preferred learning independently in the relative privacy of their cells. Combined with the lack of alternative activities, this gave them an opportunity to catch up on English and mathematics.

Remote learning in prisons was particularly challenging for the high proportion of prisoners with low levels of literacy or SEND, or who speak English as an additional language. We observed some examples of teachers taking steps to personalise work packs to cater for learners' individual needs. For example, they did this by simplifying the language used or making work packs more accessible for learners with dyslexia. However, without direct support while completing the packs, many struggled to use them. We spoke to several of these learners in multiple prisons who did not even have a dictionary they could access. One prisoner with dyslexia said he had simply been told he could not learn English or mathematics until face-to-face teaching resumed.

We know that, in some prisons, teachers have worked together to support prisoners who speak English as an additional language. In one prison, mathematics and English teachers worked with English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) colleagues to put in place more visual resources and additional support packs to help learners understand key concepts. For example, staff in one women's prison produced short video clips on techniques prisoners will use when they return to practical areas, such as how to froth milk for those training to be baristas. A few prisons we visited had made efforts to implement peer-support 'buddy' systems. It is unclear whether buddies had been trained or whether this was an effective way to support these learners.

Education managers in prisons were aware of these challenges. They recognise the detrimental impact that remote learning has had on prisoners' learning outcomes. Senior leaders acknowledged that the work packs were often too hard for learners who needed additional support with reading and writing. One manager told us it was difficult to identify the appropriate educational level for each learner remotely. This did become easier to establish once teachers could return to the accommodation units.

Prison leaders and education providers must use assessments to identify gaps in learning and help learners back into the classroom effectively and as quickly as possible.

Vocational education and work

Since the start of the pandemic, most prisoners have not had access to vocational education. This has prevented them from developing the practical skills they need for employment on release. It's also prevented them benefiting from the enjoyment of mastering a skill. Before the pandemic, prisoners could engage in practical activities through employment or in workshops as part of vocational training courses. Both avenues have been severely limited by national and local restrictions.

Between July and December 2020, HMIP found that between 10% and 44% of prisoners remained in essential work, such as in the kitchen, wing cleaning and serving meals, and in some 'essential workshops', including textiles, recycling and food packaging. However, in a high number of cases, many prisoners who carried out essential work in the prison did not have their

employment skills recognised.

Non-essential workshops have been closed for most of the past year due to COVID-19 restrictions. This has meant learners on vocational courses have not been able to complete practical elements of the curriculum. However, there were some rare cases where courses, such as horticulture, were taught outside or with social distancing.

Some prison education providers adapted workshop activity into theory-based in-cell packs. This was in preparation for when workshops could reopen. In one prison, staff had converted a barista course from a 3-week practical course to a 6-week in-cell pack. This was to prepare learners for quick progression onto practical skills once restrictions were lifted. However, the provision of packs was not consistent across vocational courses.

There is some evidence that the number of prisoners learning English and maths increased. This could be due to the lack of practical vocational training courses, which tend to be popular.

Prisoners are keen to get back to in-person trade-based training that they could use to find work on release. They are also frustrated that in-cell alternatives to vocational courses were often unaccredited. One prisoner explained that he wanted to work for a prison reform charity and felt that obtaining a qualification would make him more credible.

Following the Prime Minister's announcement on July 19, most COVID-19 restrictions have now been lifted in England. However, this is not the case for prisoners. Most prisons remain under some form of lockdown restrictions. As restrictions ease and practical, vocational training resumes, social distancing guidelines mean that capacity will remain lower than usual. Prison leaders and education providers must make sure that there are as many vocational training opportunities and places as possible.

Preparation for next steps on release

Our evidence is that prisoners have lost work experience opportunities and some prisons have struggled to maintain links with employers. Some businesses that regularly employ prisoners face increased financial uncertainty. There is a risk that this will result in businesses being less likely to invest in ex-offender employment programs or to hire prisoners, who are perceived to be higher risk candidates. This risk may be mitigated by [increases in job vacancies](#) in industries such as hospitality, due to a lack of labour supply from immigration.

In addition to increased uncertainty, prisoners have been unable to attend work placements outside prison when non-essential businesses have re-opened. The lack of work experience that prisoners would normally gain from these placements could mean that they lose out on job opportunities available to those outside prisons. These economic factors underline the importance of ensuring that vocational courses are well targeted to gaps in the job market.

Prisoners have also suffered from disruption to IAG services throughout the

pandemic. Several of the prisons visited have significant backlogs of prisoner inductions that they have yet to complete. This means that leaders do not know the educational starting points for too many prisoners. Furthermore, there are likely to be a high number of prisoners with undisclosed SEND that leaders do not know about.

Even when prisoners have received inductions, the advice that follows has often been too vague and not helpful enough. In some cases, this has led to prisoners making poor educational choices. For example, a prisoner with a degree in history chose the history in-cell learning pack but found it too easy. Another, quite understandably, chose to work in laundry and avoid education because he didn't want to be in his cell all day.

Prison leaders must work with IAG providers to clear induction backlogs as a priority. All prisoners should receive a timely and effective induction to education, skills and work when they join the prison. This is so that even prisoners on shorter sentences can make the best use of their time in prison to prepare for release.

Launching our prison education review

We are grateful to the hard-working prison and education staff who have supported prisoners and kept them safe throughout the pandemic. The risk of COVID-19 transmission was especially high in prison environments compared with the wider community. Yet, we must ask, both of prison leaders and of government, whether the wider risk to prisoners' chances of resettlement has been sufficiently weighed.

Over the next year, Ofsted and HMIP will be taking a closer look at education in prisons. This will start with research visits to prisons over the autumn term to examine reading. We will investigate how prisons assess reading ability on arrival and throughout their stay, how the whole prison works together to improve prisoners' reading and what this means in terms of prisoners' educational progress and well-being. The standard of prison education needs to improve.

Iain Anderson appointed new LGBT Business Champion

- Iain Anderson to drive forward workplace equality for LGBT people
- Appointment will focus work on reducing workplace discrimination
- Announcement comes as UK prepares to host international LGBT conference

The role will see Anderson collaborating with business to support LGBT people at work, whilst developing and sharing solutions to workplace discrimination.

Alongside the recently appointed Special Envoy for LGBT rights, Lord Herbert, he will also ensure businesses are doing all they can to help showcase the UK as an inclusive place to live and work ahead of the UK's first Global LGBT Conference, Safe To Be Me, which is taking place in June 2022.

Anderson brings a wealth of experience to the role, advising businesses on both a domestic and international level. He is co-founder and executive chairman at Cicero/AMO and focuses on public policy and corporate communications strategy, supporting many global FTSE and Fortune 500 blue chip organisations.

He has also been named one of the Financial Times / OUTstanding Global 100 Executives, an FT Male Champion of Women in Business, a Stonewall Ambassador, on the Queer Britain advisory board and a trustee of global LGBT rights charity GiveOUT.

Liz Truss, Minister for Women and Equalities, said:

"I'm delighted to appoint Iain as our new LGBT Business Champion. As we seek to build back better, his considerable experience working with a range of businesses will be crucial to forming policies that will actually make a difference, improving the workplace for LGBT people.

"We have a responsibility to ensure LGBT people can be themselves at work, not just for their own wellbeing, but also for the best interests of business and the UK economy. Attracting and retaining a talented workforce is fundamental to the success of any enterprise."

Iain Anderson, LGBT Business Champion, said:

"I am passionate about securing equality in the workplace and I'm delighted to take on this new role.

"It is important that both large and small businesses can unleash the potential of all their LGBT employees and customers.

"There is an opportunity for the UK to be a world leader on action by business to make this happen."

Lord Herbert, Prime Minister's Special Envoy for LGBT rights said:

"I welcome Iain's appointment to this role and look forward to working with him, as we champion LGBT rights across the globe.

"The UK is hosting the Safe To Be Me: Global Equality Conference in June 2022. We will be engaging with businesses to explore how, together, we can highlight the economic case for LGBT inclusion at home and abroad. I look forward to working with Iain to achieve this."

As LGBT Business Champion, Mr Anderson's role will focus on progressing LGBT equality in employment and enterprise, continuing to build on the work the Equality Hub has supported with SMEs in this field. The role will harness the influence of FTSE and sector business leaders to act as change agents to

increase diversity in business leadership.

Earlier this year Anderson hosted a roundtable for businesses, encouraging SMEs and the self-employed to share their plans around inclusive workplaces and promoting best practice. He will continue to host similar events, celebrating and advancing the government's build back better campaign in the progress.

Amongst his early priorities, Iain will work with employers to establish a business-led network that connects large organisations and SMEs, focussing on sharing best practice, and potentially resource, in order to progress LGBT equality at work.

Recognition of the economic case for LGBT inclusion extends internationally. As part of Safe to Be Me in 2022, we will be empowering businesses to advocate for LGBT equality in countries across the world.

Nancy Kelley, CEO of Stonewall, said:

"We welcome the news that Iain Anderson has been appointed to the new role of LGBT Business Champion for the Government.

"With over a third of LGBTQ+ people feeling the need to hide who they are at work, there is still much to do to ensure all workplaces are truly inclusive.

"We look forward to working closely with Iain and sharing our advice and expertise to help transform workplaces and unlock the potential of LGBTQ+ people across the UK."

Peter Cheese, chief executive of the CIPD, the professional body for HR and people development, said:

"We welcome this appointment given employers, more than ever, need to be proactive about inclusion and to understand and address any forms of discrimination in the workplace.

"CIPD research suggests many LGBT+ workers don't feel safe to express themselves and be accepted at work, which will impact on their working relationships, wellbeing and overall job satisfaction.

"There should be visible commitment from senior leaders to foster open and inclusive working environments where employees feel safe and supported, and difference is valued.

This is a vital part of being able to attract and retain the diversity of skills and experience every organisation needs; ensuring organisations reflect the communities and societies they serve and are part of."

Further information:

- The Business Champion will engage businesses to promote and encourage evidence-based initiatives that will realise change for LGBT employees, in the UK and more broadly.

- The LGBT Business Champion is appointed by the Minister for Women and Equalities for a maximum term of 18 months, the position and role holder's tenure can be renewed by another 18 months as necessary. The position is unpaid.
-

Marches Mosses marks 30-year milestone and extends NNR

The Marches Mosses, the UK's third largest lowland raised peat bog, was once known as a source of peat cut for fuel and horticulture. Now it is a leading example of how peat bogs can fight against climate change if restored.

In 1990 ownership of the land was acquired by Natural England, Natural Resources Wales and Shropshire Wildlife Trust who began the process of restoring it before being joined by the European BogLIFE Project in 2016.

The 2,500-acre peat bog, which crosses the Wales-England border between Wrexham and Shropshire, has been cleared of trees and scrub, ditches have been dammed and bunds created to restore bog water tables to the peat surface.

The 30th anniversary will also see the NNR status being spread to incorporate a further 237 acres of peatland which have been added to the restoration work.

Tony Juniper, chair of Natural England, said:

Thirty years of action to revive one of our largest peat bogs is paying dividends in helping to tackle the climate crisis and, at the same time, has boosted the survival of its rare ecology.

Places like the Marches Mosses are an example of what can be done to tackle the greatest environmental threat we face by simply allowing nature to recover and aiding that recovery with modern restoration techniques and protection through our designations as a National Nature Reserve and Site of Special Scientific Interest.

Although the Marches Mosses comprise Cadney Moss and two NNRs (Fenn's, Whixall and Bettisfield Mosses, and Wem Moss), they are actually a single large raised bog – an acidic, wet habitat perfect for the Sphagnum moss which slowly decays and stores carbon as peat. It is only when this peat is cut, dug up and dried out – now mostly for horticulture use – that the carbon is released. That is why gardeners are encouraged to do their part in the fight against climate change by using peat-free compost.

Sir David Henshaw, chair of Natural Resources Wales, said:

Restoring and protecting peatlands is the only way we can safeguard their rich biodiversity and ensure they continue to deliver the full range of ecosystem services associated with these habitats, such as carbon storage, natural flood management and a range of other services.

This collaborative cross-border project, as well as other projects in Wales and beyond, will contribute in a very significant way to addressing both the nature and climate emergencies.

Richard Grindle, chair of Shropshire Wildlife Trust, said:

Shropshire has its part to play in reducing CO₂ emissions and efforts to restore and expand sites like FWB Mosses will be a key factor in combating the climate crisis. But the Mosses are also home for rare insects and birds, which depend on the acidic nature of the peatland. Declining wildlife species have made a return to the area as the restoration progresses.

It is very encouraging to see what 3 decades of partnership work has created – imagine what can be achieved in another 30 years' time!

Notes to editor

Marches Mosses is the shortened name for Fenn's, Whixall and Bettisfield Mosses NNR, Wem Moss and Cadney Moss. It also sits within a Special Site of Scientific Interest (SSSI), a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance.

Natural England is the government's independent adviser on the natural environment. Our work is focused on enhancing England's wildlife and landscapes and maximising the benefits they bring to the public.

Natural Resources Wales champions the environment and landscapes of Wales and its coastal waters as sources of natural and cultural riches, as a foundation for economic and social activity, and as a place for leisure and learning opportunities. It aims to make the environment a valued part of everyone's life in Wales. Marches Mosses has been supported by the National Peatland Action Programme, led by Natural Resources Wales and funded by the Welsh Government. For more see www.naturalresourceswales.gov.uk.

Shropshire Wildlife Trust is a conservation charity established in 1962 to conserve and protect Shropshire's wildlife. This is achieved by directly conserving wildlife and habitat, undertaking research and reconnecting people with wildlife.

The Marches Mosses BogLIFE project is an ambitious 5-year, multi-million pound package of improvements and being delivered in a partnership led by Natural England, Natural Resources Wales and Shropshire Wildlife Trust. The funding has paid for the acquisition of a further 63 ha of peatland, and enabled water levels to be raised across 1890 acres to improve the raised bog habitat. New restoration techniques such as cell and contour bunding are being utilised to help the Mosses retain more water and prevent the peat decaying further, helping to counteract the effects of climate change. The project also aims to restore swamp, fen, willow and alder carr wet woodland, habitats missing from the edge of the bog and is a trial site for the conversion of pasture and forestry land on peat back to bog. Pollution at a former scrapyards on the peat bog is being cleared up and new visitor facilities created. This work is being generously funded by the European Union's LIFE Programme and, thanks to National Lottery players, the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

National Nature Reserves (NNRs) were established to protect some of our most important habitats, species and geology, and to provide 'outdoor laboratories' for research. NNRs offer great opportunities to the public, schools and specialist interest groups to experience wildlife first hand and to learn more about nature conservation.

[Our approach will be shaped by what the Taliban now do](#)

Thank you Mr. President, and thank you SRSGLyons for your briefing. As you said, these have been extraordinary and challenging times. I would like to thank you and through you, your team for the courage and dedication with which the UN family in Afghanistan has responded.

We are in a new situation. We all remember the Taliban's previous period in power. So we approach it clear-eyed. But we have also heard that some in the Taliban may now want a different approach. So we are also open-minded. Our approach will be shaped by what the Taliban now do.

Resolution 2593 sets out this Council's minimum expectations. We call on the Taliban to distance themselves from terrorism and to live up to the commitments they made during the Doha talks. It is in the shared interests of all countries that Afghanistan never again becomes a safe haven for Al Qa'eda, Islamic State and other terrorist groups, and does not undermine regional stability. We must all hold the Taliban to that.

We welcome the Taliban's commitments to allow safe passage for foreign nationals and Afghan citizens with documentation for travel. Again, we call on the Taliban to ensure that their actions reflect that.

We too are deeply concerned by the impact of recent events on the Afghan people. The UK is doubling its aid to Afghanistan to £286m this year. We warmly welcome the UN's Flash Appeal. So we encourage the Taliban to create the safe environment needed in order to deliver humanitarian support, including by ensuring unimpeded access for aid workers and no interference in the work of UN agencies and NGOs.

We call for the protection of human rights and the gains of the last two decades, especially the education of girls, the employment of women and the rights of minorities and I thank Ms. Wazhma Frogh, and Ms. Malala Yousafzai for your briefings today.

We have today seen disturbing images of journalists who have been beaten in the press. We are clear that the Taliban's actions must be consistent with their words and will calibrate our approach accordingly.

The 'caretaker' appointments announced by the Taliban on 7 September did not reflect the diversity of the country's regions and communities, or women. We call on the Taliban to pursue inclusive politics and an inclusive society.

Members of the Security Council share a common interest in making sure that Afghanistan does not return to the chaos of the past. So we must now work together. And we will need the UN family to continue its brave work. I commend UNAMA's efforts; as we enter this new phase, the UK stands ready to work with you. Thank you, Mr. President.

UK launches data reform to boost innovation, economic growth and protect the public

- Plans include tougher penalties for nuisance calls and text messages
- Government wants new data regime "based on common sense, not box ticking" to cement UK's position as a science and tech superpower
- Consultation launched today will also examine what more can be done to mitigate algorithmic bias
- World-leading experts appointed to the Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation's advisory board to drive trustworthy innovation

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) is set for an overhaul to drive greater innovation and growth in the UK's data sector and better protect the public from major data threats, under planned reforms announced by the Digital Secretary Oliver Dowden today.

One year on from the publication of the National Data Strategy, the government has today launched a wide-ranging [consultation](#) on proposed changes

to the UK's data landscape. As part of this, a new governance model is planned for the ICO, including an independent board and chief executive to mirror the governance structures of other regulators such as the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and Ofcom.

This follows the selection of John Edwards as the government's preferred candidate as the new Information Commissioner, who is currently serving as the New Zealand Privacy Commissioner.

Now that we have left the EU, the government wants to create a pro-growth and trusted data regime that unleashes data's power across the economy and society, for the benefit of British citizens and British businesses.

The reforms outlined in this consultation will:

- Cement our position as a science superpower, simplifying data use by researchers and developers of AI and other cutting edge technologies.
- Build on the unprecedented and life-saving use of data to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Secure the UK's status as a global hub for the free and responsible flow of personal data – complementing our ambitious agenda for new trade deals and data partnerships with some of the world's fastest growing economies.
- Reinforce the responsibility of businesses to keep personal information safe, while empowering them to grow and innovate.
- Ensure that the ICO remains a world-leading regulator, enabling people to use data responsibly to achieve economic and social goals.

Reforms will broaden the remit of the ICO and empower the Information Commissioner to champion sectors and businesses that are using personal data in new, innovative and responsible ways to benefit people's lives in areas such as healthcare – building on the use of data in tackling Covid-19 – and financial services.

The government wants to remove unnecessary barriers to responsible data use. This can help deliver more agile, effective and efficient public services and further strengthen the UK's position as a science and technology superpower.

A recent example is researchers from Moorfields Eye Hospital and the University College London Institute of Ophthalmology making a breakthrough in patient care using AI technology. The researchers successfully trained machine learning technology on thousands of historic de-personalised eye scans to identify signs of eye disease and recommend how patients should be referred for care. This new way of using data has the potential to revolutionise the way professionals carry out eye tests. The government's data reforms will provide clarity around the rules for the use of personal data for research purposes, laying the groundwork for more scientific and medical breakthroughs.

Digital Secretary Oliver Dowden said:

Data is one of the most important resources in the world and we

want our laws to be based on common sense, not box-ticking.

Now that we have left the EU, we have the freedom to create a new world-leading data regime that unleashes the power of data across the economy and society.

These reforms will keep people's data safe and secure, while ushering in a new golden age of growth and innovation right across the UK, as we build back better from the pandemic.

The protection of people's personal data will be at the heart of the planned data reform. Far from being a barrier to innovation or trade, regulatory certainty and high data protection standards allow businesses and consumers to thrive.

The consultation sets out plans to impose tougher penalties and fines for nuisance calls and text messages. These sanctions would be overseen by the ICO and build on government action in recent years that has included holding individual directors liable for nuisance calls made by their respective companies.

The government will maintain the UK's world-leading data protection standards and proposals will be built on key elements of the current UK data protection regime (General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018), such as principles around data processing, people's data rights and mechanisms for supervision and enforcement.

However, the government recognises that the current regime places disproportionate burdens on many organisations. For example, a small hairdressing business should not have the same data protection processes as a multimillion pound tech firm. Our reforms would move away from the "one-size-fits-all" approach and allow organisations to demonstrate compliance in ways more appropriate to their circumstances, while still protecting citizens' personal data to a high standard.

The use of algorithmic or automated decision-making is likely to increase substantially in coming years. We want organisations to be confident that their AI-powered services are a force for good and will not inadvertently harm consumers.

Reforms to our data regime can also help ensure that organisations can better understand and mitigate the risk of bias in their algorithmic systems. These aim to help organisations identify what is driving bias, so that they can take steps to make sure their services are not inadvertently biased or replicating societal and historic discrimination, or drawing inferences that could be deemed unfair (for example, insurers predicting someone's fitness levels from their purchasing habits).

Minister for the Cabinet Office Lord Frost said:

These reforms are another example of how, having gained new

regulatory freedoms outside of the EU, we can now take bold action in the national interest and in the interest British businesses and consumers.

Our new data regime will cement our status as a science superpower by removing unnecessary burdens and boosting innovation and growth right across the UK.

Bojana Bellamy, President of Centre for Information Policy Leadership (CIPL), said:

The UK Government's plan to reform data protection regime is bold and much needed in the modern digital and data driven age. It could be a win-win for all – organisations, individuals, and society.

It enables organisations to leverage data responsibly, for economic and societal benefits and to build their brand as trusted data stewards. It gives individuals assurances and more effective protection from genuine harms.

Accountability, risk- and outcome-based approach will be welcomed by all – these are the founding blocks of modern regulation and a modern regulator. I hope other countries follow the UK's lead.

Sue Daley, Director of tech and innovation, techUK and co-chair of the NDS Forum said:

The data reform consultation is the start of an important conversation that must include a wide range of stakeholders to explore how we could make the UK's data protection framework work better for citizens and businesses.

The National Data Strategy Forum has a key role to play to make this happen as well as supporting the other activities announced today to deliver the missions of the National Data Strategy.

Dr James Field, Founder & CEO LabGenius, said:

At LabGenius, data is at the core of our mission to revolutionise the way drugs are discovered. By combining machine learning, synthetic biology and robotic automation, we are accelerating evolution to bring advanced therapeutics to patients faster.

Ensuring that there are routes for businesses and scientific researchers to utilise data will help drive innovation like ours, however, these new routes must be trusted and command the confidence of the public.

Baroness Joanna Shields OBE, CEO BenevolentAI and Co-Chair GPAI, said:

This set of ambitious announcements are welcome. Data is a foundational asset for modern societies; creating accessible and trusted routes for businesses, civil society and researchers to access data and utilise data will help drive innovation and create better digital services. But these new routes must command the confidence and trust of the public.

Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation (CDEI)

The government has also today announced that world-leading experts have been appointed to the Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation's (CDEI) refreshed advisory board. This includes Jack Clark (Co-founder of Anthropic and former Policy Director at OpenAI), Dr Rumman Chowdhury (Director of Machine Learning Ethics, Transparency and Accountability at Twitter), Jessica Lennard (Senior Director of Global Data and AI Initiatives at VISA), and James Plunkett (Executive Director of Advice & Advocacy at Citizens Advice).

Since its establishment in 2018, the CDEI has grown into a respected centre of expertise, which has produced internationally recognised research. Going forward, the CDEI will focus on enabling trustworthy use of data and AI in the real-world.

The CDEI's multidisciplinary team of specialists, supported by an advisory board of technical specialists and expert thought leaders, will work in partnership with organisations to deliver, test and refine trustworthy approaches to data and AI governance, and address barriers to innovation.

It is already working on some of the most pressing issues in the field, from helping the Ministry of Defence to develop ethical principles for the use of AI across the defence portfolio to partnering with the Centre for Connected and Autonomous Vehicles to embed ethical due diligence in the future regulatory framework for self-driving vehicles. It is also helping the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to develop the features of trustworthy Smart Data schemes, based on extending the experience of Open Banking to new sectors.

- Unlocking the power of data is one of the government's [10 tech priorities](#).
- Last year the government published its [National Data Strategy](#) to build a world-leading data economy that works for everyone.
- Today, one year on from its initial publication, the government has published [updates](#) on its progress to deliver the [National Data Strategy's](#) other priority missions and its approach to monitoring and evaluating the strategy going forward, including a call for views.

- In the strategy the government committed to championing the international flow of data, which fuels global business operations, supply chains and trade. It also plays a wider societal role, as the transfer of personal data ensures people's salaries are paid and helps them connect with loved ones from afar.
- A [consultation](#) asked the nation to help shape the core principles of the strategy and the UK's ambitions for the use of data, including plans for new data adequacy arrangements. Respondents expressed broad support for UK adequacy assessment plans and the government's international vision to position the UK as a global champion of safe and secure data flows.
- The CDEI's 2021/22 work programme will focus on three themes: maximising the public benefit of data by enabling it to be used and shared responsibly; building a strong AI assurance ecosystem in the UK; and supporting the delivery of transformative data and AI projects in the public sector, with a focus on the most high impact use-cases.

The Digital Secretary has appointed the following individuals to the [CDEI's](#) advisory board:

- Jack Clark, Co-founder at Anthropic, Co-chair of the AI Index at Stanford University, expert member of the Global Partnership on AI, non-resident Research Fellow at CSET, expert member of the OECD's ONE AI Network
- Eddie Copeland, Director of the London Office of Technology and Innovation, member of the Smart London Board
- Dr Rumman Chowdhury, Director of Machine Learning Ethics, Transparency and Accountability at Twitter, Co-chair of the RSA's Citizen AI Jury
- Martin Hosken, Chief Technologist for Cloud Services at VMware
- Jessica Lennard, Senior Director of Global Data and AI Initiatives at VISA, techUK Board member, member of the Bank of England's AI Public-Private Forum
- Dr Marion Oswald, Vice Chancellor's Senior Fellow in Law at Northumbria University, Chair of the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner and West Midlands Police Data Ethics Committee
- James Plunkett, Executive Director of Advice & Advocacy at Citizens Advice
- Dr Mimi Zou, Co-founder and CEO of Deriskly, Associate Professor of the University of Reading School of Law

The Digital Secretary has reappointed the following individuals to the [CDEI's](#) advisory board:

- Baroness Kate Rock, Conservative Peer in the House of Lords, Senior Adviser at Instinctif Partners
- Richard Sargeant, Chief Commercial Officer at Faculty
- Dr Adrian Weller, Programme Director for AI at The Alan Turing

Institute, Senior Research Fellow in Machine Learning at the University of Cambridge

- [Edwina Dunn](#), current Deputy Chair of the CDEI, has been appointed to the position of interim Chair, while the appointment process for a permanent Chair continues.
- The advisory board was appointed through a fair and open competition run by the DCMS. The appointment term for newly appointed members of the advisory board is two years, while the appointment term for reappointed members is one year. All terms begin on 13 September 2021.
- The CDEI is committed to ensuring that its advisory board and staff are as representative as possible, and will be working with DCMS to improve the future diversity of the advisory board. The CDEI's work programme engages a diverse range of institutions and people from across the UK.
- As part of the consultation on the [National Data Strategy](#) (launched in September 2020), DCMS sought views on the CDEI's future role. DCMS published the [response to the consultation on the National Data Strategy](#) in May 2021, which pointed to broad support for the Centre's proposed future functions.