

Services for vulnerable children in the Northeast rated Outstanding

Improved services in one of the most deprived councils in England are making a real difference to vulnerable children's and families lives.

'Tenacious' social workers in Sunderland – where services have today been [rated Outstanding](#) by Ofsted after having been deemed 'inadequate' since 2015 – have been praised by Ofsted inspectors for their persistence in developing powerful relationships with children in their care and for putting their voices at the heart of services.

The swift improvements are thanks to 'unstinting commitment' from a voluntary trust established by the Government, in collaboration with Sunderland Council, to tackle entrenched failure, and the 'significant cultural change' staff have driven.

It makes Sunderland the first council to jump straight from failing in its children's services to the highest rating in one inspection cycle.

Services were placed into a trust, [Together for Children](#), in April 2017, part of a major Government reform programme to tackle persistent underperformance in areas where vulnerable children and families have been systematically failed.

Children and Families Minister Vicky Ford said:

It is so easy to focus on the challenges facing social workers, councils and children's services, without taking time to acknowledge or champion success.

The vast improvements in Sunderland demonstrate the importance of Government intervening swiftly and decisively where children and families are being failed, so that the right support is in place to level up outcomes and transform lives.

We have a duty to every child in our care to give them the same opportunities as their peers, so we cannot stand by in the face of entrenched failings.

I'm enormously proud of the positive change leaders and staff in Sunderland have achieved, working tirelessly to continue raising the bar even as the pressures of the pandemic took hold.

I'm also pleased to see the success of its early help and intervention work, meaning more families are supported to stay together safely, breaking the cycle of neglect too many have experienced in the past.

Work is now underway with the Department for Education to explore how leaders in Sunderland and Together for Children can share their experiences with other councils to help make improvements elsewhere in lower performing areas.

The Department will continue working with Sunderland to ensure it stays on track, including through the creation of an 'Edge of Care' hub where vulnerable families receive dedicated support, avoiding the need for costly placements and reducing the number of children in care.

Today's Outstanding judgement means six of the 12 local authorities in the northeast of England are now high performing, despite a high rate of children in care (107 per 10,000) and higher than average deprivation levels.

It joins North Tyneside in the top judgement category, with Gateshead, South Tyneside, Northumberland and Hartlepool now rated Good by the inspectorate. North and South Tyneside and Hartlepool are already working with other councils to share learnings as part of the Department for Education's Sector Led Improvement Partners (SLIP) programme.

Sunderland is one of eight trusts set up since 2010 to run children's services on behalf of an underperforming council, including Doncaster where, after years of failure services were rated 'good' by Ofsted in January 2018 and in Birmingham where services are no longer inadequate after nearly a decade of failure.

Since May 2010, where the Government has provided support, 50 local authorities have been lifted out – and stayed out – of intervention.

The Children's Minister recently announced a [regional recovery fund](#) for children's social care, backed by £24 million, to level up outcomes for the most vulnerable and tackling the most pressing issues they face in those areas.

Alongside this, the independent review of children's social care continues to look at where the system can do more to transform outcomes for children. Led by Josh MacAlister, it will identify how to keep children safe from harm, both at home and outside the home, as well as how to support families to stay together safely and tackling the inconsistencies in practice that exist across the country.

[New UK Government Testing site opens in Glasgow](#)

The UK Government has today (Friday 20 August) opened a new walk-through coronavirus testing centre in Glasgow.

The test centre located at the Centre of Executive Education Building, within Glasgow Caledonian University, Cowcaddens Road (G4 0BA), is part of the largest network of diagnostic testing facilities created in British history. In Scotland, this comprises of eight drive through sites, 54 walk-through sites, 42 mobile units, plus the Glasgow Lighthouse Lab which is working round the clock to process samples.

In Scotland, the UK Government is providing all COVID testing and test processing outside of the NHS.

PCR tests must be booked in advance at: [NHS Inform](#) or by calling 119. People should only book a test if they have coronavirus symptoms (a high temperature, a new and continuous cough, or a loss or change to their sense of smell or taste) or have been instructed to do so by a clinician or NHS contact tracer.

Lateral flow test kits are also now available for pick up without an appointment at local walk-in or drive-through test sites from 8am – 8pm each day. Tests can also be ordered online or by phone by calling 119. For more information and to order a test kit online, go to: Coronavirus (COVID-19): getting tested in Scotland – [gov.scot](#)

Health Minister, Lord Bethell, said:

We have built the largest network of diagnostic testing facilities in British history to ensure that everyone can get tested for covid-19 regularly. As a result, the UK is now a testing juggernaut, performing more tests than any comparable European country, which is helping to break chains of transmission, save lives and detect variants of concern.

New walk-in sites like this one make it even easier to get a test no matter where you live. If you have symptoms of COVID-19, I urge you to book a test today and follow the advice of NHS Test and Trace if you are contacted, to protect others and stop the spread of the virus.

UK Government Minister for Scotland, Iain Stewart said:

The UK Government continues to provide the bulk of testing in Scotland, a programme which is vital to our recovery from this pandemic. Alongside the roll-out of UK Government-funded vaccines, testing is helping us to manage the virus, slow down the rate of transmission and protect communities.

This new walk-through facility in Glasgow is the latest in our extensive network of testing centres supporting people in all parts of the UK.

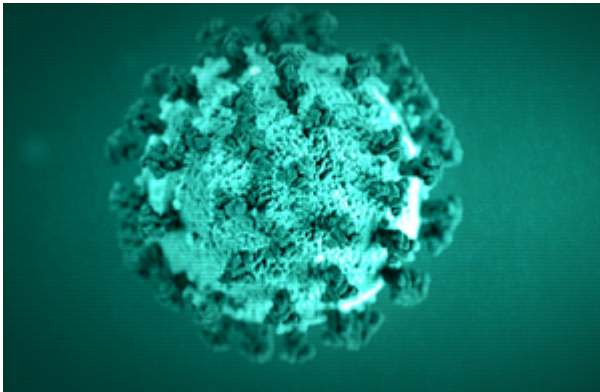
Simon Venn, Mitie Chief Government & Strategy Officer, said:

Our priority during the pandemic is to support the nation's efforts to fight COVID-19 and help keep the country running. Testing is a critical part of the UK's strategy to combat coronavirus and we're proud to support the UK Government with this vital task. A big thank you to all the NHS staff, Mitie employees and other frontline heroes in Glasgow who are working tirelessly to keep us all safe.

[First monoclonal antibody treatment for COVID-19 approved for use in the UK](#)

Press release

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has today given approval for the first monoclonal antibody treatment for the prevention and treatment of COVID-19 in the UK.



Following on from a thorough review of the evidence carried out by the MHRA, and recommendation by the Commission on Human Medicines (CHM), the government's independent expert scientific advisory body, the MHRA has approved Ronapreve as the first monoclonal antibody combination product indicated for use in the prevention and treatment of acute COVID-19 infection for the UK.

Developed by Regeneron/Roche, the drug is administered either by injection or infusion and acts at the lining of the respiratory system where it binds tightly to the coronavirus and prevents it from gaining access to the cells of the respiratory system. Clinical trial data assessed by a dedicated team of MHRA scientists and clinicians has shown that Ronapreve may be used to

prevent infection, promote resolution of symptoms of acute COVID-19 infection and can reduce the likelihood of being admitted to hospital due to COVID-19.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

The UK is considered a world leader in identifying and rolling out life-saving treatments for COVID-19, once they have been proven safe and effective in our government-backed clinical trials.

This is fantastic news from the independent medicines regulator and means the UK has approved its first therapeutic designed specifically for COVID-19.

This treatment will be a significant addition to our armoury to tackle COVID-19 – in addition to our world-renowned vaccination programme and life-saving therapeutics dexamethasone and tocilizumab. “We are now working at pace with the NHS and expert clinicians to ensure this treatment can be rolled out to NHS patients as soon as possible.

Interim Chief Quality & Access Officer, Dr Samantha Atkinson said:

We are pleased to announce the approval of another therapeutic treatment that can be used for to help save lives and protect against COVID-19.

Ronapreve is the first of its kind for the treatment of COVID-19, and after a meticulous assessment of the data by our expert scientists and clinicians, we are satisfied that this treatment is safe and effective.

With no compromises on quality, safety and efficacy, the public can trust that the MHRA have conducted a robust and thorough assessment of all the available data.

[See Information for Healthcare Professionals, and Information for UK recipients](#)

Notes to editors

1. [The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency](#) is responsible for protecting and improving the health of millions of people every day through the effective regulation of all medicines and medical devices in the UK by ensuring they work and are acceptably safe. All our work is underpinned by robust and fact-based judgements to ensure that the benefits justify any risks.
2. The [MHRA](#) is a centre of the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency which also includes the [National Institute for Biological Standards and Control \(NIBSC\)](#) and the [Clinical Practice Research Datalink \(CPRD\)](#). MHRA is an executive agency of the [Department of Health and Social Care](#).
3. The [Commission on Human Medicines \(CHM\)](#) advises ministers on the safety, efficacy and quality of medicinal products. The CHM is an advisory non-departmental public body, sponsored by the [Department of Health and Social Care](#).
4. The regulatory process known as a 'rolling review' has been used throughout the pandemic to rapidly assess promising medicines during a public health emergency in the shortest time possible. The MHRA team clinicians carried out a rigorous, scientific and detailed review of all the available data, starting in January 2021. And looked at the laboratory pre-clinical studies, clinical trials, manufacturing and quality controls and also considered the conditions for its safe supply and distribution.
5. Ronapreve is not intended to be used as a substitute for vaccination against COVID-19.
6. Rogeneron/Roche conducted clinical trials before widespread vaccination and before the emergence of variants of the coronavirus. Interpretation of serology results (the meanings of 'seropositive' and 'seronegative') is now more complex in the presence of widespread vaccination and variants of the coronavirus; it would be for the attending healthcare professional to make an informed decision on use of the current product with knowledge of (i) the vaccination status of the patient, (ii) local prevalence of variant forms of the coronavirus and (iii) the technical aspects of serology tests offered by laboratories.
7. The company has submitted interim clinical trial reports and the MHRA will receive final study reports in coming months along with the company's study report of the RECOVERY trial conducted by Oxford University.
8. The government and the NHS will confirm how this COVID-19 treatment will

be deployed to patients in due course.

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[Record 20 places bid for prestigious UK City of Culture 2025 title](#)

- Bids received from every nation in the UK as regions and groups of towns were encouraged to apply
- The new winner will be announced next year and will be at the centre of the UK's cultural spotlight in 2025

A record 20 places from across the UK have submitted an expression of interest to become the UK City of Culture 2025 – an all time high of entries for this prestigious competition.

The competition, delivered by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in collaboration with the devolved administrations, uses culture as a catalyst for levelling up areas outside London and putting new parts of the UK on the cultural map internationally.

Entrants have been tasked with proving that they can put culture at the heart of their plans to recover from the impact of the pandemic.

Regions and groups of towns have been encouraged to apply in this competition, with a number stepping forward from across the UK.

Bidding for the title in its own right has been shown to have a hugely positive impact on a place, for example previous longlisted bids have used the bidding process to bring together lasting local, national and international partners, share a vision for their area and attract investment.

To ensure as many places as possible across the country can take up this opportunity, DCMS are awarding grants of £40,000 to successful longlisted places for the first time to support their long applications.

The winner, which will be announced next year, will take on the baton from Coventry as the 2021 UK City of Culture and be at the centre of the UK's cultural spotlight in 2025.

The benefits to the winner of the title are huge, attracting millions of visitors and investment and bringing communities together to showcase the place where they live to the country and the world.

Throughout the history of this competition the winning cities have always

benefited from financial support to ensure the programme's success and lasting legacy. Coventry has received over £15.5 million from the Government to directly support its year as UK City of Culture.

Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden said:

This record number of applications from all four corners of the country is testament to the huge success of City of Culture in generating investment, creating jobs and boosting local pride.

This prestigious prize creates a fantastic opportunity for towns and cities to build back better from the pandemic and I wish all bidders the very best of luck.

Sir Phil Redmond, Chair of the City of Culture Expert Advisory Panel, said:

From Derry-Londonderry to Hull and Coventry it has been a difficult and rewarding challenge to select the next UK City of Culture, and the list of potential candidates for 2025 indicates that life in the immediate future is going to be even more challenging!

The three previous title holders have demonstrated the transformative and catalytic effect culture can bring about, even within places that have been ultimately unsuccessful but have gone on to develop collaborative and sustainable partnerships.

The list for 2025 also demonstrates the breadth of ambition, aspiration and innovation that exists from coast to coast and nation to nation across the UK and I am looking forward to that challenge of immersing myself once again in the UK's rich seam of creativity.

Coventry UK City of Culture 2021 is providing a blueprint for how culture can be at the heart of social and economic recovery. The city has already attracted over £100 million so far in capital investment to support cultural projects, such as Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry Cathedral and Belgrade Theatre, among many others.

City of Culture status also had a huge impact on Hull and Derry-Londonderry. Hull saw more than 5.3 million visits to over 2,800 events, cultural activities, installations and exhibitions. 75% of those who visited Hull in 2017 stated that it changed their perception of the city for the better and 9 out of 10 people in Hull thought that UK City of Culture had a positive impact on the city and more than nine-in-ten residents took part in at least one cultural activity.

The twenty bidders will be reduced to an initial long list of bidders in the coming weeks and then cut down further to a final shortlist in early 2022. The winner will be announced in May 2022.

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Notes to Editors

More information on [Coventry City of Culture 2021](#)

Full list of bidders:

- Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon
- The City of Bangor and Northwest Wales
- The Borderlands region, comprising Dumfries and Galloway, Scottish Borders, Northumberland, Cumbria and Carlisle City
- Bradford
- Conwy County
- Cornwall
- Derby
- County Durham
- Lancashire
- Medway
- City of Newport
- Powys
- Southampton
- Stirling
- The Tay Cities region
- Torbay and Exeter
- Wakefield District
- City of Wolverhampton
- Wrexham County Borough
- Great Yarmouth & East Suffolk

[Crime cutting prison scheme expanded](#)

- The Clink Kitchens expected to open at 25 prisons by the end of the year
- Scheme reduces reoffending rates by almost a third, helping to keep streets safe

Thousands of offenders will be steered away from a life of crime thanks to the roll-out of [The Clink](#) training kitchen scheme to 25 jails by the end of the year, Prisons Minister Alex Chalk has announced.

Already running at eight prisons including HMPs Bristol, Downview, and Styal, the programme sees prisoners train in professionally-run prison kitchens for up to 35 hours a week – preparing and cooking thousands of meals daily – while simultaneously working towards professional qualifications which will help them find employment on the outside.

The Clink has already helped over 2,500 offenders into stable and secure jobs

since launching just over a decade ago through their training initiatives, with the expansion announced today expected to support a further 2,000 prisoners into employment.

In 2019 alone, The Clink trained up over 440 prisoners – a total of 330,000 training hours – with over 280 employers across the country taking on Clink graduates upon release from prison.

Research shows that ex-offenders in work are more likely to turn their backs on crime for good, with prisoners who have taken part in The Clink's training scheme almost [a third less likely to go on to commit further offences](#) – reducing the £18 billion a year cost of reoffending and keeping communities safe.

Prisons Minister, Alex Chalk, said:

Prisoners with a job on release are far less likely to reoffend – meaning if we can provide the path to employment, we can make our communities safer.

As we continue to build back safer from the pandemic, it is absolutely vital that we continue to address the root causes of crime by supporting offenders to turn their lives around – and this scheme will do precisely that for thousands of ex-prisoners.

The Clink Chief Executive, Christopher Moore, said:

The roll-out of The Clink Kitchens project over the next three years to 70 prisons in England and Wales, will enable us to continue to repair society and support the hospitality industry that has a major skills shortage.

Social mobility is at the heart of many companies' recruitment agenda and employing a highly trained Clink graduate not only is a benefit to their business but increases the diversity of their workforce.

The partnership with The Clink Charity is one of many government schemes aimed at supporting offenders into employment with the ultimate aim of cutting crime. Other initiatives include work placements for dozens of offenders during the construction of HMP Five Wells (Northamptonshire) and the new prison in Glen Parva (Leicestershire).

Boosting access to work and [safe accommodation](#) for prison leavers will also help build back safer communities by cutting crime and reducing reoffending.

Notes to editors

- The 19 prisons anticipated to be operational by the end of the summer

are: HMPs Bristol, Brixton, Bronzefield, Bullingdon, Channings Wood, Dartmoor, Downview, Eastwood Park, Erlestoke, Exeter, Forest Bank, Guys Marsh, High Down, Highpoint, Hollesley Bay, Leeds, Lewes, Liverpool, Low Newton, Moorland, New Hall, Northumberland, Peterborough, Preston, Styal, and Wealstun.

- Justice Data Lab figures show the rate of reoffending for prisoners who participated in the scheme was 15%, compared to 22% for those who did not. This is a difference of 32%.
- Over the next 3 years the New Futures Network, a specialist part of HMPPS which works to create employment opportunities for serving prisoners and prison leavers, will support The Clink Charity to deliver their sector-led training programme.
- For more on the New Futures Network, visit: <https://newfuturesnetwork.gov.uk/>
- The scheme is being funded entirely by The Clink Charity through generous donations from philanthropic individuals and grant maintaining trusts.
- For more information on The Clink Charity, visit: <https://thelinkcharity.org/>.
- For interviews with The Clink Charity, contact: mediaenquiries@thelinkcharity.org.