

Automatic early release of terrorists ends

- Emergency legislation has become law in just 15 days
- Around 50 jailed extremists will see their automatic release blocked
- Terrorist offenders must serve at least two-thirds of their sentence behind bars before being considered by the Parole Board

The automatic early release of terrorist offenders will end from today (26 February) as emergency legislation to ensure the public is protected receives Royal Assent.

The urgent measures – introduced by Justice Secretary Robert Buckland QC MP just 15 days ago, following the Streatham attack – received substantial support across Parliament, making sure the new law is on the statute book as quickly as possible.

The move will mean terrorist offenders cannot be released before the end of their sentence without a risk assessment by the Parole Board.

It will end the current automatic half-way release for terrorist offenders who receive standard determinate sentences, forcing them to spend a minimum of two-thirds of their term behind bars.

It will apply to offenders sentenced for crimes such as training for terrorism, membership of a proscribed organisation, and the dissemination of terrorist publications.

It will mean around 50 terrorist prisoners already serving sentences will see their automatic early release blocked.

Justice Secretary and Lord Chancellor Robert Buckland said:

No terrorist should be released early only to kill and maim on our streets. Protecting the public is Government's first duty and our message is clear – enough is enough.

From today, terrorist offenders will only be released before the end of their sentence if the independent Parole Board is satisfied they no longer pose a threat, and they will face the strictest possible conditions and monitoring upon release.

In addition all terrorist offenders will be subject to robust safeguards upon release, which could include notification requirements, restrictions on travel and communications, and imposed curfews.

The new legislation follows a package of measures announced following the horrific attack at Fishmonger's Hall in November, which included:

- Tougher sentences for the most serious terrorist offenders, keeping terrorists locked up for longer and ending early release.
- Major overhaul of prisons and probation includes tougher monitoring conditions and doubling of counter-terrorism probation officers.
- Counter-Terrorism Police funding to be increased by £90 million for 2020 to 2021.
- Review of support for victims of terrorism, including immediate £500,000 to the Victims of Terrorism Unit.

In addition, the Government is reviewing the current maximum penalties and sentencing framework for terrorist offences, on the underlying principle that terrorist offenders should no longer be released until the Parole Board is satisfied that they are no longer a risk to the public.

[New surveillance system for early detection of COVID-19](#)

A new surveillance system to detect cases of COVID-19 in England has been established by Public Health England (PHE) and the NHS to strengthen existing systems and to prepare for and prevent wider transmission of the virus.

There is no current evidence to show that the virus is circulating in the community in England, but internationally there is evidence of wider transmission of the virus in areas outside of China, most recently Italy and South Korea.

This new surveillance strategy will enable PHE to identify early evidence of spread within England, if this occurs.

Some NHS hospitals have been asked to take part, which would see them implementing the new surveillance at their intensive care units (ICU) and Severe Respiratory Failure (ECMO) Centres.

Samples will be tested from patients with severe respiratory infections who do not meet the [current case definition for COVID-19](#). Depending on the results, patients will be given the support they need and rapid public health actions will be taken.

A programme of testing with a network of around 100 primary care sites across England will also complement the detection system in hospitals, so that both mild and more unwell cases can be found.

Professor Yvonne Doyle, Medical Director, Public Health England, said:

We have taken a belt and braces approach throughout this outbreak.

This new system is another important way we can help limit the impact of COVID-19 in the UK, as we continue to ensure we have the best possible intelligence to protect the public's health.

There is no change in risk for the public but taking this preparatory step now will enable us to better detect and contain the spread of the virus. The UK's infection control procedures are world-leading, and the system we are announcing today further strengthens our response.

This process will not apply to patients meeting the current COVID-19 case definition, who will continue to be isolated and tested as appropriate, and test result times will not be affected.

PHE and the NHS have tried and tested surveillance systems in place to monitor and manage the spread of community transmission of seasonal influenza each year.

UN Human Rights Council 43: UK statement for the Interactive Dialogue with the UN Special Rapporteur on Eritrea

Madam President,

The United Kingdom thanks the Special Rapporteur for her report and continued commitment to monitoring the human rights situation in Eritrea. We regret Eritrea's lack of cooperation with her.

The United Kingdom acknowledges the tough path Eritrea has navigated and recognise areas of achievement, such as in some areas of health provision. And we do believe that Eritrea has a bright future, in partnership with its people, if based on an unqualified respect for human rights. However, we do remain concerned by the human rights situation. Progress is needed to respect rights to liberty and security of person, fair and equitable treatment of detainees, promotion of freedom of religion or belief, and the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. In this regard, we welcome Eritrea's acceptance of UPR recommendations and look forward to Eritrea's Four Year Plan for Action for implementing them. We stand ready to provide support.

We will also continue to press for specific reforms including for: the National Service; freedom of religion or belief for worshippers of unregistered religions; and the release of arbitrarily detained individuals, including journalists.

Madam Special Rapporteur,

What is your assessment of Eritrea's cooperation with international organisations, including those focussed on human rights such as the OHCHR?

Thank you.

[Public urged to check flood risk as high tides continue](#)



Environment Agency urges continued vigilance as spring tides continue

With high spring tides expected this the weekend, the Environment Agency is advising people to check their flood risk online.

Coastal flooding is possible today (Friday) along parts of the Severn Estuary in Gloucestershire due to high spring tides. Localised coastal flooding is also possible for parts of the Kent coast and the north-east coast of England as high tides coincide with large waves.

Localised river flooding could also affect areas along the River Severn today and tomorrow (Saturday). Following the recent heavy rain, groundwater flooding is likely to continue in parts of the south of England for at least the next five days, leading to localised flooding of land and roads.

The Environment Agency's recovery work following Storms Ciara and Dennis continues, including on the Lower Aire in Yorkshire where there are around 14 pumps in operation removing floodwater from the washlands.

Environment Agency teams have already carried out more than 11,000

inspections on our flood defences across England. Over the course of this winter, over 128,000 properties have been protected by flood defences.

Doug Wilson, Flood Duty Manager at the Environment Agency, said:

With high spring tides expected to cause flooding along parts of the Severn Estuary over the weekend, we are advising people to keep checking their flood risk online, sign up to flood warnings, and not to drive or walk through flood water.

We continue to have teams out on the ground operating tidal gates, monitoring tides and clearing drainage channels to help reduce flood risk due to expected high river levels.

People can keep up to date with the latest safety advice by calling Floodline on 0345 988 1188, by following @EnvAgency on Twitter, or by checking GOV.UK for the latest flood updates.

Published 26 February 2020

Last updated 13 March 2020 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 13 March 2020

We have updated the content of this page to reflect the evolving flood situation.

2. 11 March 2020

The article has been amended to reflect the changing flood situation.

3. 9 March 2020

This page has been updated to reflect the changing flood situation across England

4. 6 March 2020

We have updated GOV UK with the latest weather outlook for this weekend.

5. 5 March 2020

The document has been updated to reflect the changing flood situation.

6. 2 March 2020

We have updated GOV UK to reflect the current situation

7. 29 February 2020

Updated with new information on 29 February 2020.

8. 28 February 2020

We have updated to reflect Environment Agency developments.

9. 26 February 2020

First published.

[Appointments to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland](#)

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Right Honourable Brandon Lewis MP has today announced the appointment of Geraldine McGahey to be the new Chief Commissioner, Neil Anderson to be the Deputy Chief Commissioner, and Duane Farrell, Helen Ferguson, Jarlath Kearney, Deepa Mann-Kler and Carmel McKinney as Commissioners. The appointments will be for a period of three years ending on 28 February 2023 apart from the Chief Commissioner whose appointment will be for a period of five years ending on 28 February 2025.

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

The Equality Commission was established in 1999, as part of the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement. It took over the functions of the Fair Employment Commission, Equal Opportunities Commission, and Council for Racial Equality and Northern Ireland Disability Council.

The Equality Commission is a non-departmental public body established by the Northern Ireland Act 1998. Its powers and duties derive from a number of statutes which have been enacted over the last decades, providing protection against discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, race, religion and political opinion, sex and sexual orientation. It also has responsibilities arising from the Northern Ireland Act 1998 in respect of the statutory equality and good relations duties which apply to public authorities.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is responsible under the Northern Ireland Act 1998 for making appointments to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

More information can be found on the Equality Commission's website www.equalityni.org

Terms of appointment

Appointments are made in line with the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and the Governance Code on Public Appointments.

The Chief Commissioner role is offered on both a full or part-time basis while the Deputy Chief Commissioner and Commissioner roles are part-time

appointments.

Remuneration for the Chief Commissioner role will be within the range of £70,522 to £80,847 (or on a pro-rata basis for less than a full-time appointment).

The Deputy Chief Commissioner attracts a fixed remuneration of £10,000 per annum for a commitment of four days a month, while the Commissioner roles attract a fixed remuneration of £5,000 per annum for a commitment of approximately two days a month.

Biography of Appointees

Geraldine McGahey: Geraldine is a former Chief Executive of Larne Borough Council, and SOLACE gender champion. She is currently the Deputy Chief Commissioner of the Equality Commissioner for Northern Ireland and a member of the Parades Commission for Northern Ireland.

Neil Anderson: Neil is currently head of NSPCC in Northern Ireland, with a career based in HR across a variety of organisations and sectors. He has been an Equality Commissioner for Northern Ireland since May 2019.

Duane Farrell: Duane is Chief Executive of Relate Northern Ireland. He also sits as a trustee with Grow NI and Community Evaluation NI and is a serving Equality Commissioner.

Helen Ferguson: Helen is a long-serving charity worker and former Director of Carers NI. She currently holds appointments to the Equality Commission and Human Rights Commission.

Jarlath Kearney: Jarlath is a serving Equality Commissioner. He is a former Chief Political Correspondent at the Belfast Media Group.

Deepa Mann-Kler: Deepa is a Diversity and Inclusion Specialist with Kainos PLC and visiting Professor in Immersive Futures at Ulster University.

Carmel McKinney: Carmel has held a number of senior roles in education, including Chair of the Belfast Education and Library Board. She is currently Chair of the Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service Board.

Political Activity

All appointments are made on merit and with regards to the statutory requirements. Political activity plays no part in the selection process. However, in accordance with the original Nolan recommendations, there is a requirement for appointees' political activity in defined categories to be made public.

Jarlath Kearney is former member of Sinn Fein but has declared no political activity since he left the party in 2015.

Regulation

The appointment process has been regulated by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointment (OCPA) and all stages of the process were overseen by an independent panel member.

Statutory Requirements

These appointments are made by the Secretary of State in accordance with the Northern Ireland Act 1998.