

[Court of Appeal upholds CMA decision on online sales](#)

The Court of Appeal's judgment dismisses an appeal made by Ping Europe Ltd against an infringement decision and £1.25 million fine, after the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) found it had broken competition law by stopping retailers from selling its clubs on their websites.

The move comes after [the company's initial appeal to the Competition Appeal Tribunal \(CAT\) had been dismissed](#), in September 2018.

Today's ruling, upholding the CMA's main finding and the CAT's judgment, means Ping must now allow retailers to sell its products online.

It sends another important signal that blanket bans by manufacturers on the sale of their products online are against the law.

Ann Pope, Senior Director for Antitrust Enforcement, said:

Twice now Ping Europe has appealed – and twice we've had our findings upheld that it broke the law by trying to stop online retailers from selling its golf clubs.

This sends a clear and important message: companies that try to stop people from shopping online for their products could be breaking the law.

We are determined that people should be able to shop around and enjoy the benefits of competition from online shops as well as in-stores.

Find out more about the [CMA investigation on the case page](#).

[Amanda Spielman launches Ofsted's Annual Report 2018/19](#)

Introduction

Good morning everyone, and thank you for coming today to the launch of this Annual Report, which is my third as Her Majesty's Chief Inspector.

It's unusual for us to be publishing in January. This is normally a pre-Christmas event, but it had to be put on hold because of the election. Still, if anyone made a New Year's resolution to listen to more speeches about education and children's social care, I am entirely at your service.

The election brought a lively political debate about the future of Ofsted. While that's for policy makers to decide, it is nice not to have to worry, at least today, about being handed a p45 mid-speech.

But even while Ofsted was in the uncomfortable position of being a political football, we were of course getting on with the day job, which means working firmly and unapologetically in the interests of children. Which is of course what we have always done.

Before I talk about our work in 2018/19, I just want to remind you briefly about some recent changes we have made.

A couple of years ago, we started to change the way that we inspect social care. In 2017, we introduced the social care common inspection framework. This was a big step forward, for social care providers of all kinds, and for us too. And, in 2018, we brought in the ILACS framework for children's services departments in local authorities, really emphasising the things that matter most to children themselves.

Now, after four years of the common inspection framework, education also has a new framework – covering early years, and schools and post-16 education.

While the social care frameworks are now well embedded, we're only one term in to this new education framework. Over time, it will give a more balanced view of schools, nurseries and colleges. It will help them concentrate on giving the best possible education and reduce anxiety about short-term results. Because the excessive focus that we've seen on grade targets and on predicting and managing outcomes has led to some corrosive practices and poor decision-making.

And we must guard against restricting education excessively. Exam results are of course important, but they must reflect real achievement. We should not incentivise apparent success without substance. It doesn't represent a good education for any child. And for those who aren't being read a different story every night, who aren't taken to the museum at the weekend, who don't get the chemistry set for Christmas, it's especially impoverished. These children need and deserve a proper, substantial, broad education for as long as schools have them.

And we can't afford, as a country, to lose talent, imagination or the scholars of the future because we restrict their education too early. I am proud that Ofsted is now highlighting where this happens and rewarding the places where it doesn't.

We recently inspected a school that had been requiring every child to take a sports science qualification, using up a valuable GCSE slot, whether or not they had any interest in sports science at all. We've seen schools requiring

almost every child to take a qualification in English for speakers of other languages, even though they were nearly all native English speakers who were also taking English language and literature GCSEs.

We've seen schools that have been cutting back drastically on all children's opportunities to discover the joys of languages, art, music, drama and humanities – so that most children have to give them up at age 12 or 13, when they have barely begun to discover what these subjects have to offer.

Now of course, there will always be a minority of children who really will struggle with the full curriculum. But providing tailored pathways for this minority really is very different from putting all or most children in a school on a narrow, sometimes repetitive curriculum, to achieve exam results that are better than the school down the road.

We mustn't succumb to the seductive but wrong-headed logic that we help disadvantaged children by turning a blind eye to schools that narrow education in this way as long as they deliver acceptable grades at the end. Grades are hollow if they don't reflect a proper education underneath. And we have no idea yet who the most talented and singular women and men are who will drive this country forward in the 2030s, 2040s and 2050s. They could be in any primary or secondary school anywhere. All of them should have the chance to develop their talents. Poorer children shouldn't get a worse choice.

So the framework really matters, as so many people in education have told me already. And one aspect of it that is important is that we have raised the bar for the outstanding grade, because this grade needs to mean something. It means excellence that others can learn from. So it has to reflect both substance – the high quality of education from which good results will flow – and integrity – doing things in the right way, in the interests of all children.

But let's get on to the headline findings from this year's report.

Headline findings

The great majority of schools, colleges, nurseries and childminders continue to be judged good or outstanding. This reflects the hard work of teachers, leaders and other staff who work in them.

Eighty-six per cent of schools are good or outstanding. Eighty-one per cent of colleges and other post-16 establishments, as are 96% of nurseries and childminders.

In social care, we are seeing improvement, though from a much lower base: 48% of local authorities are now judged good or better after ILACS inspections, which compares well with 36% judged good or better in the first round of inspections under the previous framework. And sustainable improvement does take time to secure.

This year, we made over two and a half thousand full inspections of social

care providers – mostly children’s homes, but also fostering and adoption agencies, residential special schools and others. Eighty-four per cent were graded good or outstanding in their most recent full inspection.

This is a strong picture of high or improving performance; and it’s important to recognise that the vast majority of institutions we inspect are doing well.

But it’s also important that we don’t allow complacency to creep in. We must ask the tough questions and highlight inadequacy, as well as excellence.

Over the last year, we’ve done that, and while it’s important to praise the good in this report, we must also expose the bad and provoke discussion on what could or should be done better.

For example, the latest PISA findings show that England has made some gains in maths and reading. That’s good news. But we should not ignore stagnant outcomes in science. And this may come back at least in part to what happens in primary schools. Subject-level inspection and key stage 2 science tests were removed 15 years ago and 10 years ago, respectively. We know from the DfE’s sample test that key stage 2 science achievement has plummeted since these control levers were removed. And more recently, our own primary curriculum work has shown us that subjects outside the core of maths and English are often weak, and that includes science. Secondary schools are now having to teach most children science from a lower starting point.

So, as we look at the high standards of education and good-quality care that most are achieving, we must ask: what lies beneath? Away from the excellent work going on in many places, what is getting in the way of further and faster improvement – and what does that mean for our children?

Education

Looking at education, we put a great deal of emphasis on integrity: doing the right things; putting the needs and aspirations of children first.

One aspect of integrity is making sure that children get a broad and rich education. That means, among other things, not taking short cuts with the curriculum; teaching a full curriculum; and teaching it well. Our new inspection framework does put the curriculum firmly at the centre of our approach to inspecting. We began it in September after a full and inclusive consultation and I’m very pleased with the response.

While it’s too early to draw any meaningful conclusions, we are seeing a shift in emphasis. Curriculum discussion is most definitely – and rightly – back on the agenda for leadership teams.

And the teaching profession has responded with enthusiasm. I’m approached at almost every event I attend by people telling me how rewarding it is to be going back to the fundamentals of education; thinking through what they teach and how best to teach it.

I'm proud of the part our new framework has played in spurring on this change. Our research clearly showed that those with the best curriculum successfully marry ambition for their students with effective planning and sequencing of their lessons.

But it also highlighted that, too often, the crucial work of proper curriculum planning has been neglected. Those who wanted to emphasise teaching skills were often fuzzy about what they really meant. In primary schools, the determination to perform well in SATs was sometimes skewing the curriculum just too far towards literacy and maths, to the detriment of other subjects. And in secondary schools, the overwhelming push to achieve respectable GCSE results sometimes was leading to repetitive exam question training.

Our research showed that schools in the most challenging circumstances can build and teach a strong, coherent and well-sequenced curriculum, just as well as any others. That's why we believe that our new framework is fair to these schools: professionals can build a good curriculum in any context.

But of course, there is more to the integrity of a school and its leadership than just its curriculum.

So, for example, we have identified and highlighted off-rolling this year and will continue to do so. The number of schools with unusual levels of pupil movement has grown and we are continuing to ask about this on inspection. Coercing parents into home-schooling when it's not in the child's best interest, or finding another way to move a child off a school's roll so they become somebody else's problem, is wrong. It undermines claims to integrity.

We have always defended the right of heads to exclude where necessary. But it has to be justified, and it has to be done fairly and properly, so that the future of the excluded child is fully considered and planned for.

We continue to see that formal, registered alternative provision, such as pupil referral units (PRUs), is mostly good or outstanding. Some 83% of PRUs are judged good or better – which is often forgotten when commentators look for easy links between exclusion and crime. But we know that there are other, murkier operators in this space.

Many of the places our unregistered schools task force investigates are unregistered alternative provision. These almost always offer a poor standard of education and are frequently unsafe. Most are simply not fit to be described as 'schools' at all. And it's actually quite shocking to find that some of these outfits are commissioned by unwitting local authorities and therefore funded by the taxpayer. The authorities are simply not checking that these places comply with the law.

And the law is not strong enough.

Our task force has now provided the evidence for three sets of convictions of illegal schools and their operators. But there is nothing to stop a convicted operator from continuing to run their school – as one convicted head

flagrantly told the BBC she intended. Ironically, the laws designed to close a legal school don't apply to one that operates outside the law. This is a loophole that has to be closed.

An education system with integrity simply would not tolerate illegal and unregistered schools that cheat children of a decent education. But not enough is happening to tackle unregistered schools.

Special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)

Turning briefly to special educational needs and disabilities, it's fortunate that we have many fantastic examples of schools that value and respect all pupils, including those with additional needs. The strength of a school is not just measured by how well it educates its high achievers, but by how well it educates all children. Schools should be – and many are – just as ambitious for children with SEND or any other kind of disadvantage.

As of last January, about 15% of school children were recorded as having SEND. That's 1.3 million children, of whom a million were getting some kind of SEN support. The system is clearly stretched – and struggling to provide support to all who could benefit from it. Paradoxically, there are problems both with the over-identification of some kinds of SEND in some places and under-identification in others.

We need to get that right so that scarce resources are directed to the right children at the earliest possible point in their lives. And we need to prioritise effectively and prevent needs increasing as children get older.

SEND is an emotive issue, but if support is spread so thinly that those who most need it are missing out, then we are not being fair to these children.

With the CQC, we make joint inspections of SEND provision, covering education, health and care, area by area. And results are concerning, with significant weaknesses identified in half the areas we have inspected. Too often, poor joint commissioning is leading to fragmented responses. Local partners need to work more coherently to make better use of limited resources.

And this is an area where the problems are about more than just the level of funding. The DfE's current review of the SEND system is very much needed, and we are contributing all our knowledge and expertise to it.

Early years

And of course, education doesn't start at five and end at 16.

Early education makes a big difference to young children and its importance is underlined by the early years foundation stage reforms and the current consultation on the new Early Learning Goals.

The work of nurseries and childminders is, of course, a fine balance between education and care. It's sometimes difficult to separate the two. The tensions that sometimes bubble up in discussions in this sector are often about how far the pendulum swings one way or the other. We know that many nurseries are very good at caring for children and keeping them safe – and quite rightly. But we have always championed learning at a young age and, with the new inspection framework in place, we are seeing more discussions about what an early years curriculum should be aiming to achieve.

The early years market has changed quite a bit in recent years. The overall number of childcare places has increased. But within that, nursery chains have expanded, while the number of childminders has continued to fall.

Our recent survey of childminders leaving the job shows that there are many reasons for giving up – the most cited being cost, bureaucracy and changing personal circumstances, in that order.

Sustainable, high-quality childcare is crucial for many families – and standards are high. The vast majority of nurseries and childminders are rated good or outstanding, and that isn't surprising, since we take prompt action to close down those that really aren't good enough. Also, parents are extremely reluctant to send their child to a nursery or childminder that is less than good. That means poor providers generally don't last long in the market. They either improve swiftly, close or – in the case of nurseries – get taken over by bigger organisations.

And we are seeing more and more nurseries acquired or opened by large chains. Several operate nationally and some internationally – in China and North America, as well as across Europe.

These larger organisations can bring new thinking and practice back into their English nurseries. One large chain told us that discovering how early Chinese children start learning to use chopsticks has lifted their own expectations here about young children's ability to learn to use a knife and fork.

And now that nearly all children are in formal childcare before they start school, we have an opportunity to make sure that all children really are ready for school. Our EIF inspections so far do show that nurseries and childminders are taking the curriculum and what children are learning seriously.

Further education and skills

At the other end of the age range, the discussion of further education and skills (FES) has taken on extra significance. In 10 days, the UK will leave the European Union and start to plot its future trading relationship with Europe and the rest of the world.

Now, more than ever, we must think strategically about skills and how the further education sector is funded and encouraged to provide the right courses of the right quality.

I'm not happy that some colleges steer too many of their students towards superficially attractive courses that fill their rolls and attract funding – whether or not they open doors for the students who take them.

This doesn't mean the courses young people are taking are completely worthless. But flooding a local job market with young people with (say) low-level arts and media qualifications, when the big growth in demand is for green energy workers, will result in too many under-employed and dissatisfied young people and wind turbines left idle.

We need a clearer focus on matching skills to opportunities. Not just for Brexit. Many FE providers operate in places the government says it wants to 'level up'. What better way to level up than to radically improve the quality of vocational and skills education in our towns? But it does also mean tackling the small minority of colleges that have under-performed or been 'stuck' for years.

Apprenticeships have become a much larger part of our post-16 work. Over the last two years, the number of further education and skills institutions has grown by over 60%. Most of the growth has been in independent learning providers (ILPs), who offer the majority of apprenticeships. Their numbers have more than doubled to 1,200. Remember, there are fewer than 200 general FE colleges.

And our inspections tell us that too many providers are not clear about the purpose of their apprenticeships. The quality of courses is still sometimes too low and the proportion of ILPs judged good or outstanding declined this year, for the third year in succession. This needs to change.

Changes to the funding model and the introduction of the levy have driven growth in the number of providers, but they've also bent apprenticeships out of shape. Even with more providers, the overall number of apprentices has dropped – and this has a particular impact on younger age-groups.

Apprenticeships can be transformational for young people. And yet one in five of all new levy-funded apprenticeships are higher- and degree-level, often aimed at people who are already doing the job, or who don't need the leg up that a great entry-level apprenticeship can provide.

Meanwhile, there are more than twice as many apprentices in business and retail as there are in the priority areas of construction and engineering.

The government and providers must look at what can be done to redress the balance across apprenticeships. The critical 16 to 19 age-group needs to be better catered for and decisions must be made about how to reverse the decline in school leavers taking up apprenticeships.

More generally, there is clearly room for greater targeting of government funding in post-16 education of all kinds.

Social care

I'd like to speak now about children's social care.

Making good decisions for children lies at the heart of our approach to social care. These are the most vulnerable children, and we always want to see that the right decisions being taken by those with the power and responsibility to help them.

The performance of social care services is improving and there's a great deal of good work being done at a local level. But it is unquestionably disappointing that half of local authorities are less than good.

Last year, I spoke about the financial pressures that the sector was under. The funding situation hasn't improved and children's services are still chronically under-resourced, in a context of increasing demand.

But it would be wrong to attribute all the weaknesses in the system to a lack of money alone. Better ways of working would also help improve the overall picture for children.

We would have hoped to see the improvements that are being made in some local authorities mirrored at an area and national level, in well-functioning partnerships. But, too often, they are not.

I have already touched on the weaknesses in many SEND partnerships. This can lead to a disjointed and inefficient approach to providing for SEND children. Elsewhere in social care, we see similar deficiencies in multi-agency working holding back the good work of individual services. Silo working is a common theme, within organisations and across partnerships. We see many places where different agencies are still not working effectively together.

We have now completed five rounds of joint targeted area inspections, or JTAs for short, working with the inspectorates for constabulary, probation, youth offending and health services. Through these JTAs, we have looked at five themes that needed this joined-up approach:

- child sexual exploitation
- domestic abuse
- neglect of older children
- child criminal exploitation and – most recently –
- sexual abuse in the family, which reports shortly

We have reviewed the findings from all five to highlight common areas of weakness. And again, these often relate back to silo working:

- a lack of information-sharing across agencies
- sluggish decision-making
- gaps arising from a failure to make the best use of each agency's expertise

There's also a lack of crossover with adult social care. That happens in the

transition of disabled children into adults' services. And also when children are affected by the behaviour of adults who are sometimes themselves are in crisis – or who are inflicting domestic abuse. And there is sometimes a level of over-optimism about the capacity and capability of adults to change that can leave children vulnerable to further neglect and abuse in the home.

Of course, removing a child from their home is fraught with challenges – not least of which is providing the child with a safe, supportive place to live.

Our research into matching in foster care is complete and we'll be publishing our findings in the spring. That work was carried out against the background of a serious shortage of foster carers nationally. The 'Staying Put' policy – that allows young people to stay with their foster carers past the age of 18 – is welcome, but it does put extra pressure on the system.

Other significant issues are the supply of children's homes and the capability of their staff. The national supply is not matching the local needs of children. And children's homes are not in the right places. At the end of this year, there were around 130 more homes than the previous year. But while there were 60 more homes in the North West, the number in the South East shrank by nine. This does not reflect the geographical profile of the care population.

There is no co-ordinating strategy to manage the supply of children's home places at a national level. Unsurprisingly, this results in a lack of homes in the expensive cities and regions, and an oversupply in areas where property is cheaper. This encourages local authorities to send children far away from home, and indeed sometimes makes it very hard for them to do anything else, especially for teenagers with complex needs.

Our analysis of children's home ownership showed that the level of private equity investment in the sector is growing. It is creating new patterns of ownership, just as it is in nurseries. The 10 largest private and voluntary owners of children's homes own just under a third of all homes outside the public sector. They do do a good job, by and large – with a higher ratio of good and outstanding homes compared to other owners. But it's another example of how new ownership models may need us to rethink the lines of accountability.

There is also a clear need to consider how commercial operators (and indeed local authorities and others as well) can be guided and incentivised to open homes where they are most needed. In the absence of a coherent national approach, we will continue to see poor placements often made out of necessity rather than incompetence. And that includes the placing of young teenagers in unregistered children's homes, which has recently attracted attention in the media and in Parliament.

Another big issue for children's homes are the low levels of training, support and pay that reflect an undervalued workforce. We need to make sure that residential care roles remain attractive.

And secure homes and centres have a particularly difficult job to do. The

issues of capacity and capability that affect all children's homes are most concentrated here, and the picture is bleak. Of 14 secure homes, only eight are now judged good or outstanding. Disappointing as this is, the position of secure training centres (STCs) is worse. Two of the three STCs are graded as requires improvement and one, Medway, has recently been judged inadequate.

Secure training centres struggle with leadership and management and have many staff who are poorly trained and ill-equipped. We have raised serious safeguarding concerns, including over the use of pain-inducing techniques on children. There is a secure school plan to replace Medway, but the project is a long way from fruition. While the government is planning to replace all STCs, the three centres cannot simply mark time while they remain responsible for the children placed there.

Coming back to mainstream schools, we know how much parents care about behaviour at their child's school. And earlier this year, our research into teacher well-being showed that low-level disruption remains the bane of many teachers' working lives. It doesn't always grab the headlines, but it's hugely unsettling in classrooms.

Getting behaviour right lies behind so many education success stories. And as we highlighted recently, sorting behaviour helps improve schools that have been stuck in a cycle of low achievement for years.

Last year we began a research project looking at behaviour management, to uncover what effective schools do to maintain good discipline and teach children to self-regulate.

Unsurprisingly, we found that consistent policies work – when they are understood and practised by staff and bought-into by pupils and parents. That's the same whatever specific approach is taken. We aren't about to advocate a single off-the-peg solution. But our research helps us pinpoint where schools are getting it right, and to use that insight to refine our inspections.

Another piece of research we published last year looked at how schools in London were responding to knife crime. Sadly, it captured the mood of the times. Knife crime and knife fatalities have become one of the country's biggest public policy concerns. And our report highlighted the role that schools should play in the local partnerships that tackle knife crime. But at the moment, they are too often left out.

We also spoke out against a problematic narrative that directly attributes the rise in knife crime to school exclusions. We have emphasised that no credible causal link has been shown between exclusions and knife crime, or indeed between exclusions and crime more generally.

There is a correlation, of course – children excluded are often those who have complex and difficult lives outside school. And we do need to make sure that we give these children good, full-time education, in the right school or alternative provision for them, to reduce the risk of them being drawn into gangs or exploited. But it doesn't follow that the act of being excluded

makes a child pick up a knife or carry drugs, or that banning exclusions will solve wider societal issues.

Views like these are not always popular in every quarter, but they show how important it is that we speak truth to power, using our independence from government to urge change where it's needed and caution when it's required.

And we will still point out to parents that they need to do their bit – whether by setting and maintaining boundaries for their children or even just by potty-training them well before they reach school age.

This year, we've criticised the 24-hour contact culture that heaps pressure on teachers – as emails ping into their inboxes from parents who sometimes expect instant answers at random times of day or night.

And we've called for an end to the government's policy of exempting outstanding schools and colleges from inspection – which has removed so many from scrutiny for over a decade and deprived parents of a true and up-to-date picture. I'm very pleased that Ministers have now begun moves to scrap the exemption. Reaction so far, from the education sector and from parents, has been overwhelmingly positive about bringing these schools and colleges back into scope.

As well as speaking truth to power, we don't duck controversy or difficult topics. Everyone with a responsibility for children must speak openly and honestly about the bad things that can happen. Some subjects are inherently taboo, but we have seen all too often what happens when problems are not aired. We have seen it in the scandalous failure to tackle sexual exploitation of children because to do so meant crossing lines of race, culture and religion, with all their inherent sensitivities.

And that's why I have been so disappointed in how little progress has been made in people's willingness to discuss difficult issues publicly, despite the dreadful example of the grooming gangs.

On several occasions since I took this job, we have drawn public attention to serious concerns in the state and independent sectors, as well as in unregistered operations. We have seen schools illegally segregating pupils and giving girls a much worse deal than boys. We have found books in schools that promote corporal punishment or say that a wife cannot deny their husband. Teaching materials are censored to airbrush women out of history, even including Queen Elizabeth 1st.

Over and over again, we have reported findings that should have led to proper public discussion of some very difficult issues, only to see that few people are willing to tread in these sensitive areas and that real concerns drop out of sight almost at once.

And more generally, many people find it hard to acknowledge that the different rights we value are not always easy to reconcile with each other. The interaction of religious freedom with the law of the land; rights for groups versus rights for individuals, perhaps especially girls; the extent of

parents' rights over children – these are some areas where tensions arise.

And schools are often where these tensions play out. This year, a small number of state schools were picketed and bullied by protestors. Some were undoubtedly parents, but many others were seasoned agitators, wanting to escalate problems.

The subject of their anger was relationships education in primary school – which generally amounts to telling children that there are different types of families, some with a mum and a dad, some with just one parent, some with only grandparents, and some with two mums or two dads.

Out of this simple concept, protestors constructed a depressing tissue of exaggeration, outrage and, sometimes, lies. Actually, children were not being taught about the mechanics of gay sex; and they were not being turned towards homosexuality nor away from their families and their faith.

The children, as well as teachers, had to walk into school past placard-waving protestors and then listen to diatribe blasting through megaphones outside. It was, quite simply, intolerable.

And yet, there was no swift condemnation from government and remarkably little from other local and national political leaders. The powerful voices that should have supported the children and the school were largely muted. Headteachers spoke of being isolated. Where leadership was desperately needed, it was lacking.

So we spoke out. We backed the headteachers under fire and we said unequivocally that children should learn about different kinds of family. And I will keep us doing what we can to get people to face and talk about the difficult things. Very soon, we'll be publishing a joint thematic inspection report on another taboo subject: child sexual abuse in the family, which is often incest. That's a word that most of us aren't even comfortable saying. Let's try to give this research the discussion it deserves.

Conclusion

Today's report reflects on the changes we have made to our inspections: to look at schools, colleges, children's homes, nurseries and local authorities as they actually operate today. They are changes aimed at building inspection around the kind of professional dialogue that truly helps those we inspect.

And we also add value through our research reports; by sharing insights about the sectors we monitor; and by addressing the most difficult issues that affect children, which are often hard to discuss. That is how we can be a force for improvement.

And as we look forward, we need to keep evolving and improving. We need to keep up with the changes that are taking place in the sectors we look at. True accountability to parents and the public – one of the main reasons we exist – ought to encompass the new ownership structures that are shaping both education and social care.

Whether it's multi-academy trusts running schools, national and international companies operating nurseries, or private equity companies owning children's homes – the models of ownership, of governance, of management are changing. Accountability needs to keep pace, to make sure that institutions continue to do the right things, act with integrity and make decisions in the best interests of children.

We need to reflect that our education and social care systems are increasingly interconnected, and co-operation is vital. Parents need to support schools' efforts to tackle bad behaviour. Local authorities and schools need to work together to make sure every child has a suitable place. Councils, police, health, justice and social services need to break down the silos. They need to involve schools to tackle knife crime, but not put the blame at their door. And Ofsted needs to play its part to incentivise this co-operation.

I truly believe that our education system and social care sector benefit from strong, independent scrutiny. It shouldn't be feared, and it mustn't be avoided. We entrust our children to schools and social workers; to nurseries and colleges. Inspection, undertaken in the right spirit, makes sure that shadows don't lengthen, dust doesn't settle and the progress of our schools and children's services can be seen and appreciated by all.

Thank you.

*[STCs: secure training centres

[Prepare for flooding to reduce impacts on mental health](#)

Experiencing damage caused by extreme weather such as storms or flooding can increase the chance of facing mental health problems such as stress and depression by 50% while a quarter of people who have been flooded still live with these issues at least two years after the event.

This is according to research highlighted by the Environment Agency this Flood Action Week as it urges people to be better prepared for the potentially devastating impacts of flooding.

Flooding can have a negative impact on mental health for several reasons – from the financial repercussions of fixing extensive damage to the loss of sentimental items and the stress it places on victims' relationships. It often results in people having to move out of their homes, displacing them from their community for many months.

But taking action to prepare for a flood can reduce damages by around 40% as

well as reducing the likelihood of suffering from mental health impacts in the future, which is why the Environment Agency is calling on those at risk to familiarise themselves with its [‘Prepare, Act, Survive’ guidance](#) – a simple set of instructions to help keep people and their possessions safe in a flood. The guidance includes simple but effective advice such as preparing a bag with medication and important documents and moving valuable and sentimental items upstairs or to higher ground.

Worryingly, low income households are eight times more likely to live in tidal floodplains than more affluent households, but 61% of low-income renters do not have home contents insurance, meaning they’re more susceptible to a financial shock as a result. According to data from insurance company Aviva, most low-income renters would struggle to meet typical insurable losses with nearly three quarters (73%) unable to meet an unexpected bill of £500 without help. In addition to meeting the financial costs, flooding can cause heart-breaking sentimental loss with the likes of photographs, keepsakes and ornaments among some of the most common non-replaceable items to suffer from water damage.

Worcester resident and flood resilience campaigner Mary Dhonau, 58, has seen her house flooded on many occasions, with the worst bringing a torrent of waist-height sewage into her family home in 2000. It had a devastating impact on her family and their neighbours.

Mary Dhonau said:

When my street flooded in 2000, we had just found out my youngest son was severely autistic. The bewilderment when he realised the flood had ruined his toys was devastating. One of my neighbours who is severely agoraphobic had to move out of her house, and another who had been recently widowed found all her wedding photographs had been ruined by the floodwater. Living through a flood is the most appalling experience and really does compound issues you are already dealing with.

I campaign to raise awareness of flooding because I know – first-hand and through thousands of people’s stories I’ve heard through my work – what the true impact of a flood can be. Check whether you are at risk, sign up for flood alerts and make the necessary preparations. You will need all the mental strength you have if the worst should happen.

Caroline Douglass, Director of Incident Management & Resilience at the Environment Agency, said:

Anyone who has experienced a flood will know just how extensive the impact can be on their lives – it’s not just the financial stress, it’s the loss of irreplaceable sentimental belongings and the strain it can have on those affected.

We are already seeing more frequent and intense flooding as a result of climate change, so we would urge everyone to know the simple steps to take – such as moving possessions upstairs and preparing a grab bag with medicines and important documents – to help reduce the damage and keep yourself and your family safe.

To support its campaign this year, the Environment Agency has created a short film showing the devastating impacts that flooding has on a home and family. The film, narrated from a child's perspective shows a dolls house with mouldy walls and carpets, ruined family photographs and toys, simulating the real damage that flooding causes. The film will be shown throughout flood action week to encourage people to think about taking action to prepare for flooding.

Click [this link](#) to view the short film.

[CMA publishes loyalty penalty update](#)

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) investigated the loyalty penalty – where companies penalise longstanding customers by charging them higher prices than new customers or those who renegotiate their deal – in response to concerns raised by Citizens Advice in a super-complaint.

In its December 2018 report, the CMA uncovered bad practices by firms in the 5 markets highlighted by the super-complaint: mobile phone contracts, broadband, household insurance, cash savings and mortgages. These included continual year on year price rises, costly exit fees from contracts, time-consuming and difficult processes to cancel contracts or switch to new providers, and auto-renewal policies that switched unsuspecting customers onto more expensive contracts, often without sufficient warning.

In its response to the super-complaint, the CMA made a number of recommendations to Ofcom and the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA), the regulators that govern these sectors, and government to help them better protect consumers. It also launched its own investigations examining auto-renewal practices in two sectors.

Today's report provides an update on the progress made by regulators one year on, and highlights areas where it expects to see further and more timely action.

Updates include:

Mobile:

Ofcom has made progress in this market. It has introduced new rules, which

come into effect from February, on end of contract notifications and annual best tariff notification. This will mean that customers will be told when their contract is coming to an end, and shown the best deals available, including SIM-only deals. As well as this, almost all of the major mobile phone providers have committed to reduce bills for people who have paid off their contracts in full. As part of this, the regulator has asked providers to agree to voluntary commitments to tackle the issue of customers continuing to pay a higher rate once their handsets are paid off. Whilst these are all positive steps in the right direction, the CMA is concerned that only two providers, Virgin Mobile and Tesco Mobile, have agreed to fully address its concerns about customers still paying a higher rate once handsets are paid off. And major provider Three has not agreed to offer any commitments at all. Ofcom plans to monitor how successful the commitments are and the CMA looks forward to the findings of this review.

Broadband:

Similar to mobile, Ofcom has introduced new rules to ensure customers will be told when their contract is coming to an end and shown the best deals available. Again, these come into effect from February. Ofcom has also secured voluntary commitments in this market. Some providers have promised to carry out annual price reviews for vulnerable customers to check they are on the best deal. Others have committed to reduce the difference between the monthly prices paid by new, or re-contracted customers, and those who are have finished their contract. Whilst this is a welcome step, more is required. Ofcom is planning further work and will report in the coming months.

Insurance:

The FCA published its interim findings report in October 2019, identifying that insurance markets are not working well for consumers and discussing a range of solutions that it could introduce. These possible solutions include requiring firms to automatically move consumers to cheaper equivalent deals. The CMA supports the FCA's approach to these issues, which build on its principles for healthy competition. It believes that the FCA's proposed solutions have the potential to address the loyalty penalty and looks forward to the final report in the early part of 2020.

Cash savings:

In a recent consultation paper, the FCA has set out proposals for a single easy access rate that would mean longstanding customers get the same rate as those who have recently finished an introductory offer. The CMA welcomes this and is pleased that a clear timetable has been set out for implementing any new rules and assessing their impact in a speedy way.

Mortgages:

The CMA is aware of FCA research on mortgage switching but would like to see swift progress in developing ways that help or protect longstanding customers who could switch but do not. It would also like to see a clear timetable for

implementing these.

Alongside its scrutiny of regulators, the CMA is progressing its own investigations to find out whether longstanding customers are losing out as a result of potentially unfair roll-over contracts. It is looking at how these are used by big companies like [Nintendo, Sony and Microsoft](#), as well as firms that supply [anti-virus software](#). An update is anticipated in early spring.

The CMA also continues to call on the Government to bring forward its promised Consumer White Paper and, with it, the extra powers to help the CMA to act even more decisively on behalf of consumers and fine firms that break the law.

Andrea Coscelli, CMA Chief Executive, said:

Just over 12 months ago we reported that people were being over-charged by around £4 billion a year in essential markets. It is important practices that aid this are stamped out and we're pleased to see progress has been made in helping to stop people being penalised for their loyalty.

But more still needs to be done to make sure that loyal and, in some cases vulnerable, customers are not let down or ripped off. We urge the regulators of the industries under scrutiny to keep up the pace, and we will continue to monitor their progress.

For our part, our enforcement action on auto-renewal practices in certain sectors continues, and we call on the Government again to give us the extra powers promised last year to fine companies that we find are breaking consumer protection law.

You can read the report on our [loyalty penalty case page](#).

A further CMA update report following up on the progress made is also planned by July.

Notes to editors:

1. The CMA is the UK's primary competition and consumer authority. It is an independent non-ministerial government department with responsibility for carrying out investigations into mergers, markets and the regulated industries and enforcing competition and consumer law.
2. In June 2019, the Government announced that it will consult on giving the CMA new powers to fine businesses who have broken consumer law directly (ie without the need to go through a court). It also [announced that it will legislate to give regulators, such as Ofcom and the FCA new powers](#) to stop longstanding customers being taken advantage of if their existing powers are insufficient. In addition, [the CMA has also proposed wide-ranging reforms](#) to strengthen our consumer enforcement and our market study/investigation powers so that we can more effectively investigate and take action against firms on these and other types of

issues. We will continue to work with the new Government to take forward these reforms and potential changes to clarify laws around unfair renewals.

3. We also welcome the Government's previous commitment to legislate for civil fines to be available where companies break the law. We look forward to working with Government on how to achieve a direct enforcement model, where the CMA (and potentially other enforcers who wish it) are empowered to decide whether consumer protection law has been broken and to impose fines directly.
4. The Enterprise Act 2002 (the Act) makes provision for designated consumer bodies to make super-complaints. Citizens Advice is a designated consumer body.
5. Enquiries should be directed to press@cma.gov.uk or 020 3738 6460.
6. Follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#). Sign up to our [email alerts](#) to receive updates on the markets cases.

[Industry meet to discuss objectives of new Earth observation satellite](#)

- Industry meet today to discuss new UK-led Earth observation satellite to study climate change
- First climate and calibration observatory in space
- Upgrading performance of Global Earth Observing System

Industry are meeting today, 21 January, at the European Centre for Space Applications and Telecommunications in Harwell, Oxfordshire to discuss a new climate mission, which will be supported by the [National Physical Laboratory's](#) (NPL) capability and expertise in measurement science.

The UK Space Agency agreed, in November 2019, to invest £374 million per year with the European Space Agency (ESA) to deliver international space programmes, with £200 million invested in Earth Observation missions, including the TRUTHS (Traceable Radiometry Underpinning Terrestrial- and Helio- Studies) satellite mission.

Part of the UK's commitment to combat climate change, TRUTHS will set a new benchmark for fundamental climate data and remove biases from existing sensors, helping to ensure essential long-time-base studies of key parameters which impact our understanding of the Earth's systems and how they are changing. Among these are those related to the carbon cycle – monitoring health and capacity of natural sinks of carbon dioxide like the forests and ocean phytoplankton, as well as performance and consistency of the planned future constellation of greenhouse gas (GHG) monitoring satellites.

While there is no doubt that the Earth's climate is changing and near-global consensus that mankind is playing a major role, the timescale and nature of

its impact remains uncertain. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has reported this uncertainty, showing that the ensemble of climate models forecast a range of potential further temperature rises of the Earth, from ~ 0.5 °C to 5 °C by 2100, dependent on emission scenarios.

The primary objective of TRUTHS is the creation of a 'climate and calibration observatory in space' which will reduce uncertainty in the Earth-observing data, leading to improved confidence in decision making, particularly related to climate mitigation and adaptation strategies.

As TRUTHS is 10 times more accurate than current Earth-viewing satellite instruments and can calibrate the reflectance of stable targets like Earth deserts and the Moon, currently used as references to correct biases of satellites, it will even allow historic sensor data to be calibrated and the climate record to start earlier.

TRUTHS will be the first mission to include a primary radiometric standard as part of its on-board calibration system. This Cryogenic Solar Absolute Radiometer (CSAR) is a space-based version of the primary standard used terrestrially in most of the world's National Metrology Institutes (NMIs). The CSAR is used to underpin all optical radiation measurements, for example measuring the efficacy of light bulbs, and this regular calibration to an absolute standard in space allows the sensor degradations normally occurring on other missions to be corrected.

The Earth observation satellite data will be directly downloaded to a single receiver station likely to be in Svalbard and from there transmitted to a data processing centre in the UK. As the TRUTHS data is considered a 'public good' it will be provided free and open to any user. In addition to improving our understanding of the planet and the effectiveness of strategies to mitigate against climate change, it is expected that TRUTHS will help facilitate further growth in commercial services for Earth observation and climate data benefiting the UK economy.

Professor Nigel Fox, NPL states:

The TRUTHS mission can be thought of as 'putting NPL into space' a 'gold standard' reference which will enable SI traceability to be established in space for Earth Observation data in the same way that we do for other terrestrial products and services such as time, mass and length, leading to increased trust in Earth observation, as well as climate data and services.

Beth Greenaway, Head of Earth Observations and Climate at the UK Space Agency, said:

The UK has a fast-growing and world-class Earth Observation sector and our major investments into European Space Agency programmes will continue to build these capabilities. This is a fantastic opportunity to lead on an innovative mission to help tackle climate

change.

With so much of the work for TRUTHS taking place in the UK, we hope to inspire a new generation to take up careers in space engineering and climate science.

About TRUTHS

TRUTHS is an ESA Earth observation mission, the initial phase of which was adopted at the ESA Space19+ Ministerial Conference last November. Financed by the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Czech Republic, Greece and Romania with full implementation planned (for decision and funding) at the next ESA Ministerial Conference in 2022.