

Education Secretary addresses Confederation of School Trusts Annual Conference

I am delighted to have the chance to join you all today and add my voice to yours on why I believe 'truly civic' is such a timely theme.

But before I do, there are a couple of things I would like to say first.

I am sure I speak for all of us when I say we are united by the horror of what is being done to our fellow sovereign state Ukraine.

I have been humbled by how schools and communities across the country are opening their arms to welcome those who have had to flee their homeland.

And that leads me on to another, even bigger thank you for the way you have handled the past two years.

I can honestly say I am in awe, in awe, of how you have kept young people learning during the pandemic. So thank you, a massive thank you for your dedication and your professionalism.

Although covid has now moved from pandemic to endemic, people's worries about the cost of living continue to present challenges for all of us.

But there is much room for hope and optimism.

I'd like to spend my time with you today to explain why I think we are turning a corner.

Although the pandemic has been hugely disruptive across all our schools we are returning to normal.

Our plans for recovery are working.

Thanks to the hard work of teachers and staff, primary pupils are making up their lost learning in maths and reading.

Our GCSE and A Level students are sitting exams for the first time in two years.

Our national tutoring programme is set to become mainstream, giving bespoke help to all children who need it, when they need it.

Over 1.5 million courses of tuition have been started since November 2020. And with time still left, I urge you all to register so we can see this number rise even further.

We are building on the success of Oak National Academy's work in the

pandemic. We are establishing a new arms-length national curriculum body to co-create packages of free, adaptable, digital curriculum resources and video lessons.

The schools' budget has had a substantial £7 billion cash increase which will enable schools to make sure every child is supported to reach their potential. This will bring the total funding to £56bn by 2024-25.

This £7bn is money that will help schools increase teachers' pay, including by delivering on our manifesto pledge of a £30,000 starting salary.

My job as Education Secretary is to make sure that every child, wherever they are from, has the same chance to get on in life. Everything I do is driven by a clear duty to make excellence the expectation, not the exception, for every child right across our nation.

This is why we published the Schools White Paper, that sets out ambitions for all children across the country.

This is also why we commissioned the recently completed Independent Care Review and published the SEND and Alternative Provision Green Paper to make sure that our ambitions extend to every child, especially the most vulnerable.

I know from experience – whether in business or leading the vaccine rollout – that the hardest thing to do with any complex system is to scale it successfully.

But I also know this is exactly what our best trusts already do. And the Government can support you – our very best leaders – to scale what works and deliver on our vision of opportunity for all.

I want to build an inclusive education and care system in which all children, young people and adults – no matter their circumstances – have great options for high quality education and training at every stage of their lives.

I set out in the Schools White Paper that I envision strong trusts playing a leading role in achieving our shared ambitions for children.

Let me be clear: I know that strong trusts deliver transformative benefits for children, especially disadvantaged children. You are my champions and I need you to succeed in our shared endeavour.

For our part, in Government, we will take a holistic approach to this, considering the role of commissioning, regulation and inspection – through the Review of Regulation and Commissioning, which I'll say a bit more about shortly.

And as part of this, by now you will all be aware of the Schools Bill.

It's something I am hugely proud of. Why?

Because at its heart, this Bill will support our shared ambition to help

children, parents and teachers benefit from the strong trusts that you run.

Our Bill includes proposals to safeguard schools' characteristics so that more and more schools feel confident joining great trusts.

It will also propose base line requirements for trusts to meet.

Because the reality is – and the Confederation of School Trusts has rightly raised this concern before – that we don't want those who are failing, to damage the excellent reputation that you have all worked so hard to build.

But let me be clear: this is not about the Department for Education telling you how to run your trusts.

I believe – this Government believes – that you know best how to deliver excellence. It is not something that can be achieved by a list of standards, or a piece of regulation.

There has been some concern about the scope of our Bill, especially with regard to Academy Trusts.

Specifically, I know some people are concerned about Clause 1 and the possible centralisation of power over academies.

I hear those concerns. So let me say again; I will NOT impose any new burdens that would restrict the very freedoms that enable you to be such a success.

I'm here to listen to you. I want to get this right. We need to get this right.

Let us not lose sight of why we all want to empower strong trusts. I have always said that I will be the evidence-led Secretary of State and the evidence tells me that every day that a child is not in a strong trust is a missed opportunity to improve their life chances.

I am a man on a mission, my friends, and I know you are with me on this mission.

And I need your help to go further. Standards in some areas of our country are still too low, so we need our best leaders and trusts (that means you) to drive change and level up opportunity.

Because children in our education system now, and the many more that will follow in years to come, depend on it.

So, I am committed to working with you so we get this right. Indeed, I need your help to get this right. I look forward to working together to ensure we continue to deliver effectively, to secure the best outcomes for children across the country.

To make this happen, I want to work with you all on a review of the way we will regulate and commission the school system.

The White Paper and the Schools Bill recognise that the current regulatory system for trusts wasn't designed for a fully trust-led system comprising thousands of schools across the country.

Let's put a more positive spin on it: you have become a victim of your own success! It is because of the increase in the number, and size, and quality of academy trusts and the many benefits you bring to pupils, parents and staff alike that we are now in a position to put the trust system on a permanent statutory footing.

We will be working closely with all partners on the review, bringing clarity and consistency for children, parents and trusts.

As I will never tire of saying, you are our allies on this journey.

I do not believe that we can regulate for excellence. The Department for Education's job is to create a climate that supports you to run excellent schools for the pupils you serve, not to impose a model on you from Whitehall.

My job, and yours too, is to make sure we support one another and work together. If we do that, my friends, we will achieve something truly special.

We know how brilliant you are, and that many of you already show your civic duty by helping schools outside your own academy trust so that other pupils in the wider community can benefit.

I share your view of the role of education in society, and of trusts as a new form of civic institution, with a responsibility to advance education for the wider public benefit. And I know trusts take this civic responsibility seriously, acting as a force for good within their communities and for the children they educate.

We have seen this especially during the challenges of the past two years, with trusts playing a vital role in supporting their staff and schools during the changing reality we all faced.

We also know how strong families of schools weathered the Covid storms more effectively than standalone schools, and I saw up-close the Herculean efforts to keep schools open through the new year's Omicron wave.

Many trusts came together with others including local authorities, to support vulnerable children and families during this time, again displaying their civic duty.

Again, levelling up is our civic duty in action. It is a collective response that says no, we are not going to just accept that some areas of the country are routinely left behind.

We must spread brilliance and opportunity, so that it extends equally from the most prosperous county towns to our most rural and isolated spots, and to our most vibrant cities.

We need schools, trusts, local authorities and faith bodies to all work together to build strong and inclusive families of schools in every region.

I began by mentioning Ukraine. It is a terrifying example of what happens when individual rights and freedoms are under attack.

I also said the subject of being truly civic has never been more timely.

I would like to thank the CST, Leora and her team, for reminding us of something that people can all too easily take for granted.

We are living in a country of opportunity, where individuals have more chance to fulfil their potential than ever before.

It is a tolerant and generous country, I would go so far as to call it the best country in the world, and we must continue to cherish the rights and freedoms that underpin it.

I urge you, colleagues and friends, to work with me to deliver opportunity for all.

You are my best allies on this journey, and we shall together make our education system a shining civic example.

Thank you.

Anglers welcomed back to river fishing as the Close Season ends

From today, Thursday 16 June, anglers are encouraged to start fishing in our rivers again as the statutory close season for coarse fishing in England's fisheries comes to an end. The 16th is an eagerly awaited date in many angler's fishing calendars.

Coarse fishing is prohibited in some of England's waterways from March 15th to June 15th (inclusive) each year to protect vulnerable fish stocks while they are spawning.

The close season provides an opportunity for the Environment Agency and partners to carry out projects up and down the country to further enhance habitats which are vital for improving fish spawning. An important task is monitoring spawning populations of barbel and chub, boosting our understanding of populations and their habitat use.

Heidi Stone, Environment Agency Fisheries Manager, said:

The annual close season is vitally important to protect our fish stocks, enhance our fisheries, and improve the fishing experience for anglers around the country.

I'm grateful to all of our anglers who comply with the rules and regulations and I am delighted it is now time for anglers to pick back up their rods and return to the river.

The Environment Agency and partners also carry out important work in the winter months to ensure the close season is as beneficial as possible to fish populations, wildlife and the broader environment. This includes:

- Big catchment scale enhancements conducted to improve our fisheries, including re-naturalising river channels, speeding up flows, and protecting banks from erosion. This will increase diversity and spawning success.
- The construction of fish passes to help all fish species move freely and increase their chances of spawning success. Six new passes were built, for example, at the River Ouse in Yorkshire.

Environment Agency officers, in partnership with the Angling Trusts Volunteer Bailiff Service (VBS), have conducted patrols throughout the close season to help protect spawning fish. This year marks the 10th anniversary of 'Operation Clampdown', and officers carried out 542 patrols from 15th March to the end of May, reporting 49 anglers for offences and 162 other alleged breaches of fisheries legislation. Anglers have the potential to be fined up to £50,000 for fishing in the close season, highlighting the importance of this period to protect fish populations.

From today, anglers can return to rivers and benefit from an improved fishing experience. Those returning to fishing, or taking up the sport for the first time, should make sure they have a [fishing licence](#), with 100% of fishing licence income invested by the Environment Agency into the enhancement and protection of England's fisheries. We have made this even easier this year by making the online purchase journey easier with the added benefit of the option to have a digital licence, saving postage costs and allowing more money to be spent on fisheries.

Further information:

- The close season prohibits fishing in rivers, streams, drains, specified canals, and some still-water sites of special scientific interest (SSSI).
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Directors falsely applied for £100,000 bounce back loans

David Garry Harrison (48) and Paul Hudson (47) both received 11-year bans after they did not dispute they caused their company to apply for £100,000 worth of bounce back loans it was not entitled to.

The pair, both from Cullompton, Devon, are now disqualified from directly, or indirectly, becoming involved in the promotion, formation or management of a company, without the permission of the court.

David Harrison's ban became effective on 31 May, while Paul Hudson's disqualification began on 9 June.

Ace Buildings and Maintenance Services Limited was incorporated in June 2017 and carried out general building and maintenance work.

Ace Building and Maintenance Services Limited, however, began to struggle and by October 2019 had a winding-up petition presented against it because it could not pay its debts.

The directors entered into discussions about insolvency arrangements before causing Ace Buildings and Maintenance Services Limited to first enter into a company voluntary arrangement in February 2020. A creditors voluntary liquidation in December 2020 followed, with the company stating liabilities of more than £340,000.

The building firm's insolvency, however, triggered an investigation by the Insolvency Service before investigators discovered David Harrison and Paul Hudson caused Ace Building and Maintenance Services Limited to submit two sham applications for bounce back loans it was not entitled to.

On 4 May 2020, David Harrison and Paul Hudson successfully applied for a £50,000 bounce back loan but did not declare the company was distressed and had entered into a company voluntary arrangement with close to £110,000 worth of liabilities.

The two directors submitted a second bogus application on 16 June 2020. Again, they did not declare Ace Building and Maintenance Service Limited's difficulties or that it has already received the maximum amount allowed under the bounce back loan scheme.

Mike Smith, Chief Investigator for the Insolvency Service, said:

Bounce back loans provided a vital lifeline to help viable businesses during the pandemic. David Harrison and Paul Hudson, however, cynically applied for government support they were not entitled to when they were fully aware their company was insolvent and was not able to pay its debts.

11-years is a substantial amount of time to be removed from the corporate arena and their disqualifications will protect the public and creditors, while also serving as a clear warning to other rogue directors that we will robustly tackle financial misconduct.

Ace Buildings and Maintenance Services Limited's Liquidator is considering the bounce back loans and recovery of funds.

David Garry Harrison is from Cullompton, Devon and his date of birth is February 1975.

Paul Hudson is from Cullompton, Devon and his date of birth is January 1974.

Disqualification undertakings are the administrative equivalent of a disqualification order but do not involve court proceedings. Persons subject to a disqualification order are bound by a [range of restrictions](#).

[Further information about the work of the Insolvency Service, and how to complain about financial misconduct.](#)

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on:

The devastating impact of Putin's war on the most vulnerable in Ukraine: UK statement to the OSCE

Thank you Mister Chair. This week I will focus on the disproportionate impact of the deteriorating humanitarian situation on the most excluded and vulnerable groups in Ukraine.

The need is immense: the latest analysis by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reports that 15.7 million people need humanitarian support within Ukraine, and over 32% of the population have been forced to flee their homes. We know, from too much experience, that war affects different groups of people in different ways. But at its core – vulnerable groups require proper and adequate access to health and social care, food and the financial means to survive, and protection against predators and those who wish them harm.

Women and children currently make up the vast majority of Ukrainian people seeking refuge. This group faces significant risk of gender-based violence, trafficking and sexual exploitation and abuse, and often lacks adequate access to paedological healthcare and sexual and reproductive health services.

We are horrified by the many reports of rape and sexual violence committed by

Russian armed forces in Ukraine. Let me be clear: the perpetration of sexual violence in armed conflict is a war crime. The indifference with which these crimes are committed belies their profound and far-reaching consequences. Survivors, children born of rape and entire communities feel their impact. This is why these barbaric acts must be investigated and those responsible held to account. We have recently launched the [‘Murad Code’](#) which provides guidelines on how to conduct these investigations safely, ethically and effectively. The UK will support further through the £10 million civil society fund and financial and technical support to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

For some women and girls, the risk of sexual violence and exploitation is heightened by disability. Those with learning and psychosocial disabilities and those in institutions are particularly at risk.

Indeed, many people with disabilities have experienced the cruelty of President Putin’s war. Many are unable to evacuate and have been excluded from humanitarian responses. We emphasise our particularly urgent concern for the safety of the 100,000 children confined to nearly 700 institutions across Ukraine, who cannot flee the Russian Armed Forces. And with every unlawful attack on civilian facilities, the Russian government feeds the problem: the number of Ukrainian people with disabilities grows, and their ability to obtain assistance diminishes.

Older people face the same, often compounded, risks of abandonment, violence and lack of access to the most basic of services. As set out in the [April 2022 Moscow Mechanism report](#), fragile health and mobility difficulties make it challenging for them to flee from the horrifying war in their country. Moreover, since most of Ukraine’s elderly population relies on old-age pensions, the disruption to social security infrastructure leaves them without means to live.

The April Moscow Mechanism report also described how violent acts motivated by homophobia are largely tolerated throughout areas under temporary Russian control. Indeed, the Russia Patriarch Kirill cited gay parades among the main, quote, “sins” necessitating the invasion. The UK condemns this in the strongest possible terms. Nobody should face violence or discrimination because of who they are or who they love. While humanitarian crises make everyone vulnerable, existing discrimination and violence against LGBT+ people can put them at heightened risk within conflict zones and while fleeing.

Moreover, the impact of the Russian government’s war of choice on the defenceless extends beyond Ukraine. I have spoken to this Council before about the devastating effect of Russia’s illegal war on global food security. I repeat: it is President Putin’s responsibility to lift this blockade. The poorest and the most vulnerable should not starve because of one man’s territorial ambition.

Mr Chair – we need to speak up for the most vulnerable in our societies. Those individuals are at their most vulnerable during a time of war. We need to speak up for them to ensure they have a voice. We need to speak up for

them to ensure that they are not forgotten. The Russian government's unprovoked, illegal war has many brutal and horrific edges – but the impact it has on Ukrainian women and children and the most vulnerable in society is the most tragic and the cruellest. Russian diplomats and Russian military officials should look deep into their souls. You are enabling this. You can choose to disenable it.

Finally, the situation of prisoners of war in Ukraine is gravely concerning. The [Geneva Conventions](#) are clear – all those serving with the Ukrainian Armed Forces should be treated as Prisoners of War. We condemn the reported sentencing of two British Nationals, who were serving with the Ukrainian Armed Forces, by the so-called DPR in eastern Ukraine. The judgement against them is an egregious breach of International Humanitarian Law.

Mr Chair, we reaffirm our full support for and solidarity with Ukraine and its people. They are standing tall and we stand with them. For as long as it takes.

[UK commits to reform of the Consumer Credit Act](#)

News story

Plans to modernise consumer credit laws to cut costs for businesses and simplify rules for consumers have been announced by the government today (16th June).



The Consumer Credit Act, which came into force in 1974 and governs billions of credit card purchases and loans each year, is highly prescriptive and increasingly cumbersome and inflexible – confusing consumers and adding unnecessary costs to businesses when implementing its requirements.

The government will move much of the Act from statute to sit under the Financial Conduct Authority – enabling the regulator to quickly respond to

emerging developments in the consumer credit market, rather than having to amend existing legislation. It will also simplify ambiguous technical terms to make clear to consumers what protections they have – and make it easier and more cost effective for businesses to comply with regulation.

Economic Secretary to the Treasury, John Glen said:

The Consumer Credit Act has been in place for almost 50 years – and it needs to be reformed to keep pace with the modern world.

We want to create a regulatory regime that fosters innovation but also maintains high levels of consumer protection.

That's why I have committed to undertake this ambitious long-term reform – and it's exactly what I'll deliver.

Leaving the EU has provided additional opportunity for regulatory reform and the government will examine which parts of EU retained legislation can be repealed or replaced to ensure regulation is better suited to the needs of the British people.

The reforms will allow lenders to provide a wider range of finance whilst maintaining high levels of consumer protection. For example, we will ensure that the information a consumer receives throughout the lending process is easy to understand and will be both screen and print-friendly. We will also ensure that lenders are able to more easily provide credit for emerging and new technologies such as electric cars, helping millions of people embrace technological innovation.

The reforms will build on the recommendations of the Financial Conduct Authority's retained provisions report and the Woolard Review – which both made recommendations for a reformed regime.

A consultation is expected to be published by the end of this year outlining the government's proposals, and seeking views from stakeholders on how the Act should be reformed.

Further information

Published 16 June 2022