

Statement to Parliament: Conduct guidance for elections, 4 May 2017: written ministerial statement

Minister for the Cabinet Office Ben Gummer laid a statement in Parliament on guidance for civil servants in the pre-election period.

On 4 May 2017, elections will take place to local authorities in England, Wales and Scotland, including for directly elected Mayors to 7 combined authorities, and 2 local district councils in England.

As is normal ahead of elections, guidance has now been issued for civil servants in UK government departments and those working in arm's length bodies on the principles that they should observe in relation to the conduct of government business in the run up to the forthcoming elections.

The guidance sets out the need to maintain the political impartiality of the Civil Service, and the need to ensure that public resources are not used for party political purposes during this period. The period of sensitivity preceding these elections began on 13 April.

The guidance was published on 10 April, and copies have been placed in the Libraries of the House and [on GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

Press release: Series of inspections to focus on children living with neglect

A new set of inspections will examine how local partner agencies – including local authorities, health and probation services and the police – are working together to protect children living with, or at risk of, neglect.

The series of six joint targeted area inspections (JTAI) involving Ofsted, Care Quality Commission (CQC), HMI Constabulary and HMI Probation will begin in May this year.

JTAI assess how effectively agencies are working together in their local area to help and protect children. Each set of joint inspections also evaluates the multi-agency response to a particular issue or theme.

Following feedback from key stakeholders, the four inspectorates decided that the latest series of JTAI should look at local support services for children living with neglect. In particular, the inspections will focus on the experiences of children aged between seven and 15 years old, who may be at higher risk of going missing or being exploited, or who exhibit challenging behaviours in adolescence

Uniquely for this JTAI, inspectors will also speak with school leaders and staff to get a wider picture of how neglect is identified and referred.

HM Chief Inspector Amanda Spielman said:

Identifying signs of neglect in middle childhood and adolescence can be very complex, as children at this age experience and respond to neglect differently from younger children. However, at any age, the impact of childhood neglect can be lifelong.

It's crucial that local partner agencies understand the long-term effects of neglect and recognise the need for early and appropriate intervention.

These inspections will provide valuable insight into the local area response to neglect. And importantly, they will highlight good practice that others can learn from.

Professor Steve Field, Chief Inspector of General Practice at the Care Quality Commission, said:

Neglect is a terrible and far-reaching problem that can present itself in many aspects of a child's life. We all have a responsibility to safeguard those children who find themselves at risk of neglect, and that means understanding where these risks might be and also where services are doing great work to support children in their area.

By focusing on individual children's experiences and tracking them across services, these inspections will provide an invaluable chance to see how agencies are working together and the impact this has on the welfare of young people.

HM Inspector of Constabulary, Wendy Williams, said:

It is important that all police officers have the correct knowledge to fully understand the signs of neglect. As HMIC has said previously, although the protection of the vulnerable is not just the responsibility of the police, police officers will often be the first point of contact for vulnerable victims.

These inspections aim to provide an understanding of how the police works with partner agencies not just to identify child neglect, but also to provide the best possible support and protection to keep children safe.

HM Chief Inspector of Probation, Dame Glenys Stacey, said:

Many of the children of adult offenders may be experiencing neglect. This programme will give us the opportunity to examine and report on the work of probation providers in improving the lives of children and young people living in very difficult circumstances. Youth offending teams supervise many children and young people who have experienced and continue to experience neglect in childhood and towards adulthood.

We will identify the extent to which youth offending teams work with these children and young people to reduce the impact of neglect and improve their life chances.

Guidance published [today](#) sets out how the inspections will work in practice.

Each inspection report will include narrative findings, clearly setting out what local partners are doing well and what they need to do to improve.

In 2014, Ofsted produced a report on local arrangements to safeguard neglected children under the age of 10. This multi-agency review of the experiences of older neglected children will build on that evidence base.

When all six inspections are complete, an overview report will be published to highlight learning and good practice on the theme of childhood neglect.

Notes to editors:

1. Joint targeted area inspections were launched in January 2016. The first series focused on children at risk of sexual exploitation and those missing from home, school or care. The individual inspection reports are all available on the Ofsted website and a thematic overview report will be published in the autumn.
2. The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), academies, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.
3. The Care Quality Commission (CQC) is the independent regulator of health and social care in England. It makes sure health and social care

services provide people with safe, effective, caring, well-led and responsive care, and encourages care services to improve. It monitors, inspects and regulates services to make sure they meet fundamental standards of quality and safety and publishes what it finds to help people choose care.

4. HMIC is an independent inspectorate, inspecting policing in the public interest, and rigorously examines the efficiency and effectiveness of police forces to tackle crime and terrorism, improve criminal justice and raise confidence. HMIC inspects all 43 police forces in England and Wales, together with other major policing bodies.
5. HMI Probation is an independent inspectorate, sponsored by the Ministry of Justice, and reporting directly to the Secretary of State on the effectiveness of work with adults, children and young people who have offended, aimed at reducing reoffending and protecting the public. Further information about the work of HMI Probation is at www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprobation.

[News story: GC function explained at lunchtime lecture for European Commission](#)

The Deputy Government Chemist, Selvarani Elahi, gave a lunchtime lecture at the European Commission's Joint Research Centre in Geel, Belgium

The Deputy Government Chemist, Selvarani Elahi, was invited to give a lunchtime lecture at the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (EC JRC) in Geel, Belgium on the 28 March 2017.

Selvarani gave a presentation titled "Dispute Resolution and Fighting Food Fraud – UK Style" in which she gave an overview of the history of LGC, the home of the Government Chemist. She explained the role of the Government Chemist and highlighted three case studies, showing the value the function brings to food testing related disputes.

Selvarani also detailed the benefits of joining the [Food Authenticity Network](#), a free on-line resource developed by UK government to help bring together those involved in food authenticity testing.

Following the lunchtime lecture, Selvarani met with the Head of the EC JRC's Food Fraud Unit and other scientists to discuss and agree avenues for future collaboration. The meeting was very fruitful and it was agreed to pursue future collaboration opportunities.

[News story: CIC Webinar: Tuesday 25 April 2017 @ 11.00am](#)

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[Press release: New squad formed to tackle drone threat to prisons](#)

A specialist squad of prison and police officers has been formed to tackle the threat drones pose to prison security, Prisons Minister Sam Gyimah revealed today.

The team of investigators will work closely with national law enforcement agencies and HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) to inspect drones that have been recovered from prisons in a bid to identify and track down those involved in attempts to smuggle in contraband.

Crucially, this new set-up will investigate the specific drones use by individuals around prisons.

The latest crackdown will help disrupt the flow of drugs and mobile phones, which hinder attempts to create prisons that are places of safety and reform, and where offenders have the chance to turn their lives around.

And it follows recent successful convictions of a number of offenders, including two offenders whose collective sentence spans over a decade – the most significant to date.

Prisons Minister Sam Gyimah said:

We are absolutely determined to tackle the illegal flow of drugs and mobile phones into our prisons and turn them into places of safety and reform.

The threat posed by drones is clear, but our dedicated staff are committed to winning the fight against those who are attempting to thwart progress by wreaking havoc in establishments all over the country.

My message to those who involve themselves in this type of criminal activity is clear; we will find you and put you behind bars.

The newly-formed team of officers will contain staff from the police and HMPPS. They will bring together intelligence from across prisons and the police to identify lines of inquiry, which will then be passed to local forces and organised crime officers.

This announcement comes after the longest sentence of this type was handed down on Friday 31 March. A joint operation between police and prison officers led to the arrest of Remo White-Channer and Romaine Gayle.

The two were jailed for six years and six months and four years and four months respectively for attempting to flood prisons across Hertfordshire, Suffolk and Kent with contraband worth around £48,000.

As part of a crime group they used drones to try and fly packages containing cannabis, spice and heroin, as well as phones into three different prisons. The strong sentences send a clear message that those found flying drones into prisons will face significant time behind bars.

In December, Dean Rawley-Bell, 21, was jailed for four years and eight months after he used a drone in attempts to smuggle drugs and mobile phones into HMP Manchester.

In October, drug dealer Renelle Carlisle, 23, was jailed for three years and four months after he was caught outside HMP Risley in Warrington with a drone in his bag, trying to smuggle drugs inside.

And in July, 37-year-old Daniel Kelly was locked up for 14 months for trying to supply offenders at HMP Elmley and Swaleside in Sheppey, HMP Wandsworth in London and HMP The Mount in Hemel Hempstead with contraband.

The new squad is the latest step in efforts to disrupt drugs and mobile phones in prisons. The Justice Secretary has secured funding for 2,500 extra frontline prison officers, as well as introducing mandatory drug testing and the training of over 300 drug detection dogs to specifically detect psychoactive substances.

The Government has made it a criminal offence to possess any psychoactive substance in a prison, an offence which is punishable by up to two years.

Proposed changes in the [Prisons and Courts Bill](#) will make it easier for prisons to test offenders for emerging dangerous psychoactive substances, whilst all prisons have been equipped with portable and fixed detectors to tackle phones.

A £3 million intelligence hub to tackle gang crime behind bars has also been established by the Justice Secretary.