

Speech: Survivors in safe houses will have their right to vote honoured

Just over a year ago, I learnt about a young woman from Bristol who had been forced to flee an abusive relationship and move, with her toddler, to a secret address.

Once there, she simply wanted to express her democratic right to vote and participate in British democracy – but it was too complicated to register anonymously and, without registering, she would not be able to express one of the most basic rights we too often take for granted.

That individual was Mehala Osborne, now a formidable and leading [Women's Aid](#) campaigner whose story has been heard up and down the country.

Mehala's story is one of bravery, resilience and inspiration in the pursuit of something as important as the democratic right to vote – and today the government is acting on what we have learned from her story.

Currently, those wanting to register to vote anonymously have to go through a rigorous process, providing a high level of documentation to register to vote, which many survivors of abuse lack.

Having to arrange for signed documents from senior officials – such as superintendents in the police and directors of social services at councils – would be an incredibly daunting task for anyone, let alone survivors of domestic abuse. It is clear that the existing system has often let down those affected by domestic abuse – and that cannot continue.

That is why today the government is setting out proposals to reform the anonymous registration scheme in England and Wales and make it more accessible for those escaping domestic abuse to participate fully in our democracy.

The [proposals](#) include plans to update the list of court and other orders that are acceptable as evidence of the risk to an applicant's safety, as well as considering expanding the current list of possible evidence that can be used.

We also intend to lower the seniority required of an attester from the police or social services – and we will consider adding additional professions to those who can attest, such as GPs and nurses.

Mehala's journey is nothing short of inspiring. The majority of survivors who find themselves in a refuge or similar safe house simply won't vote because of the daunting barriers to registering anonymously.

That leaves a huge hole in our democracy. I look forward to continuing to work with Women's Aid and other organisations to make sure we get this right and that we help survivors of domestic abuse make their voices heard.

As the Prime Minister made clear on the steps of Downing Street in July, I am determined to build a democracy that works for everyone.

And that is what this Government is doing – by tackling voter fraud wherever we find it, ensuring that UK citizens who have lived overseas for longer than 15 years have the right to vote, and equalising the size of constituency boundaries so that every vote matters.

But we are equally clear that those who have been constrained by their abusers must have full freedom to express themselves in the democratic processes and the political life of the country – a commitment that we are today moving one step closer towards.

Only by doing so will we build a democracy and a country that works for everyone.

[Press release: Investigatory Powers Commissioner appointed: Lord Justice Fulford](#)

The Prime Minister has approved the appointment of Lord Justice Fulford as the first Investigatory Powers Commissioner for a 3-year term. Lord Justice Fulford will take up appointment with immediate effect.

Prime Minister Theresa May said:

I'm pleased to announce the appointment of Lord Justice Fulford as the first Investigatory Powers Commissioner. He brings a wealth of experience in the judiciary and expertise in matters of law which will be crucial to his vital role scrutinising the use of investigatory powers, as part of a world-leading oversight regime.

Biographical notes

The Rt Hon Sir Adrian Fulford qualified as a barrister in 1978 and took Silk in 1994. He was appointed a Recorder of the Crown Court in 1995. He was appointed a High Court Judge of the Queen's Bench Division on 21 November 2002. He was elected to serve as 1 of the 18 judges of the International Criminal Court in 2003 for a term of 9 years, and was assigned to the Trial Division. He was sworn into office on 11 March 2003. He was appointed as a Lord Justice of Appeal on 10 May 2013.

With effect from 1 January 2015, Sir Adrian was the Deputy Senior Presiding

Judge for England and Wales. From 1 January 2016 he became the Senior Presiding Judge. He is currently the Judge in Charge of IT and leads for the judiciary on HM Courts & Tribunals Service reform.

Whilst holding the appointment as the Investigatory Powers Commissioner, Sir Adrian will remain a Judge of the Court of Appeal.

Background

[Section 227 of the Investigatory Powers Act 2016](#) provides for the Prime Minister to appoint the Investigatory Powers Commissioner (IPC). The role of the IPC is to authorise and oversee the use of Investigatory Powers by public authorities.

Sir Adrian will now begin work on establishing his office, and will take on the statutory functions of the IPC in due course.

[News story: Aircraft Accident Report AAR 1/2017 – G-BXFI, 22 August 2015](#)

Hawker Hunter G-BXFI crashed on to the A27, Shoreham Bypass near Shoreham Airport.

[Aircraft Accident Report 1/2017](#) was published on 3 March 2017.

It concerns the accident to Hawker Hunter, G-BXFI which crashed on to the A27, Shoreham Bypass near Shoreham Airport during air display on 22 August 2015.

[Press release: Poor due diligence and monitoring put charity assets at risk](#)

The Charity Commission ('the Commission') has today published a [report](#) of its statutory inquiry into [Human Aid UK \(registered charity number 1138111\)](#) ('the charity'). The charity describes itself as an international humanitarian charity which strives to alleviate the suffering of the oppressed and says it works in collaboration with dedicated partner organisations in remote areas of the world, including Africa, Middle East and South Asia. The inquiry was opened to examine issues identified at visits to the charity regarding their

controls around fundraising and the end use of charitable funds.

The inquiry found that whilst the charity acted on some of the earlier regulatory advice provided by the Commission to address vulnerabilities in its financial controls and management of fundraising, the charity had not exercised sufficient oversight of its work with partners, particularly in areas which are considered to be high risk or where conflict prevails.

The Commission found that the charity's records and systems regarding its activities in Turkey/Syria and/or on the Syrian border did not sufficiently account for the proper end use of all the funds transferred from the charity to partner organisations. The inquiry could not reconcile some costs with the records and systems inspected at the time on one project with a partner organisation based in Turkey for an emergency medical service convoy to Syria and found further deficiencies in relation to the charity's monitoring of the end use of funds relating to a baby milk project with another UK partner.

The inquiry did not find evidence of specific misapplication of charity funds. However, due to the overall lack of adequate documentation to demonstrate the charity's due diligence checks and monitoring of the end use of funds, the inquiry concluded that the trustees had failed to adequately protect the charity and its assets.

The Commission has exercised its powers and directed the trustees to carry out a number of actions to address compliance with key trustee duties including a review of the charity's financial management and controls as well as its due diligence policies and record keeping. The Commission is monitoring the charity's compliance with the order.

Michelle Russell, Director of Investigations, Monitoring and Enforcement at the Charity Commission, said:

Many charities doing vital humanitarian work rely on partner organisations to help them carry out activity in the UK and overseas. The findings in this report are a reminder to those charities about the need for them to carry out proper due diligence on partners that receive money from or work closely with the charity and proper monitoring and verification of spend of the charity's funds.

A fundamental basic is the need to keep adequate and appropriate receipts and other records of spend and have proper systems and procedures in place to request, analyse, record and hold these on a systematic and regular basis.

Monitoring is important to ensure that trustees are able to account for the proper use of the charity's funds and that they maintain donor confidence. Our experience of talking to and visiting charities that work in this field is that good record keeping is a basic given but there is also the need to use a combination of monitoring and verification techniques adapted to the different

working environment and areas the charity is working in. This is particularly important where a charity works with or through partners, or works in high risk areas.

Further guidance about trustees' obligations and responsibilities can be found in [The essential trustee: what you need to know, what you need to do \(CC3\)](#). Further guidance on due diligence and monitoring is available in the Commission's compliance toolkit – [Chapter 2: Due diligence, monitoring and verifying the end use of charitable funds](#).

The [full report](#) is available on GOV.UK.

Ends

PR 13/17

Notes to editors

1. [The Charity Commission](#) is the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales. To find out more about our work, see our [annual report](#).
 2. Search for charities on our [online register](#).
 3. Details of how the Commission reports on its regulatory work can be found on [GOV.UK](#).
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[News story: Defence Secretary applauds service of globally deployed Scots](#)

During a visit to Edinburgh, Sir Michael met soldiers from Scots-based Army units. Many have either recently returned, or are about to deploy on missions with the UK's allies overseas.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

Scotland is on the frontline defending the United Kingdom from growing threats at sea, in the air, and on land. Whether countering Daesh, improving security in Afghanistan, or playing a leading role in peace-keeping missions, Scottish troops deserve our gratitude for the incredible job they do.

At any time, at least 20% of the troops from Army units in Scotland are actively involved in operational, defence engagement or training with other

nations.

Midlothian-based personnel of The Royal Highland Fusiliers, Second Battalion the Royal Regiment of Scotland (2 SCOTS) are part of the UN mission in South Sudan. They are also supporting NATO's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force and is currently deployed to Kenya where it is leading battle group training for 950 personnel.

Scotland's 51 Brigade have taken part in exercises with the Emiratis, Kuwaitis and the Qatari Armed Forces.

Scotland is also home to the UK's nuclear deterrent submarines at Her Majesty's Naval Base Clyde, and the Quick Response Aircraft at RAF Lossiemouth.