

Universities open doors

Universities raised by 40 per cent last year the number of unconditional offers to school-leavers in a move that teachers said was demotivating A-level pupils. **Page 4**

Bogus oil boss sent to prison

An oil executive earning £120,000 a year who never attended university has been jailed after fabricating multiple academic qualifications on his CV. **Page 5**

More rail strikes over Christmas

The Rail, Maritime and Transport union was accused by a minister of "playing Scrooge" after it announced more strikes aimed at disrupting Christmas rail travel. **Page 16**

COMMENT

Unless we act now, we won't be able to curb the power of Google and Facebook

IAIN MARTIN, PAGE 33

Trump suffers election blow

Voters in the conservative southern state of Alabama dealt President Trump his most serious political setback yet when they elected a Democrat to the Senate. **Page 36**

Funds tsar says sorry for attack

An academic appointed by the Financial Conduct Authority to investigate hidden costs in fund management has apologised for criticising the industry. **Page 45**

Froome faces doping doubts

The British cyclist Chris Froome must fight for his reputation after a drugs test in September showed twice the permitted level of asthma medication. **Page 80**

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DINNER TONIGHT

Duck noodle stir-fry with Chinese plum sauce

Roasting intensifies the flavour of the fat plums around at the moment. Roasted with red onions, they liquidise into a sloppy, thick cream with soy and Chinese five-spice to add flavour.

Serves 2 Prep 20 min Cook 30 min

Ingredients: 6 plums; 2 small red onions; 50g brown sugar; ½ tsp Chinese five-spice; 1 tbsp soy sauce; 4 tbsp wine vinegar; 2 nests egg noodles; 2 Gressingham duck breast fillets; 6 spring onions; 1 carrot; 100g



sugar snap peas; 2 tbsp groundnut oil. Heat the oven to 200C/gas mark 6. Run a sharp knife round the plum middles, twist apart and place, cut-side up, in a roasting tin. Cover with 25g sugar. Halve the onions round the middle and place, cut-side down, next to the plums. Pour in 75ml water. Roast for 20 min. Remove plum stones and onion skins. Blitz with juices

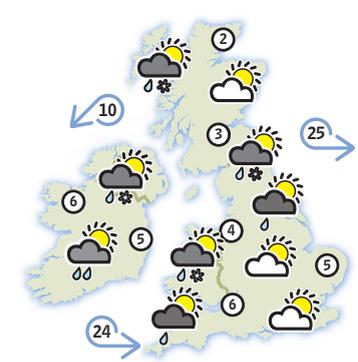
to make a thick purée. Tip into a pan with five-spice, soy and vinegar. Simmer for 10 min. Liquidise, adding extra sugar if tart (unlikely) and water if stiff. Cook the noodles according to packet instruction. Slice the duck. Finely slice the spring onions and the carrot. Heat a wok over a high heat, swirl the oil round the pan. Add the duck, stir-frying for 2 min. Add the veg, frying for a further 2 min. Drain the noodles, toss with 2 tbsp cooking water and 2 tbsp plum sauce. Add to the pan, mix and serve with extra plum sauce. **Lindsey Bareham**

OFFER

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SEE PAGE 42 FOR DETAILS

THE WEATHER



Feeling cold in many places with frequent wintry showers in the north and west. **Full forecast, page 68**

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Criminals on probation are monitored with a phone call

Richard Ford Home Correspondent

Thousands of criminals are being supervised with just a brief telephone call every six weeks, according to the probation watchdog.

Offenders have one face-to-face assessment meeting before being put on "remote supervision", which is overseen by junior probation staff. An inspector described the process as no more than "checking in".

The junior staff have caseloads of up to 200 offenders to monitor, the annual report of the chief inspector of probation said.

Inspectors raised concerns over whether telephone monitoring would detect changes in the risk posed to the public and how staff could be certain the offender was making the call.

Dame Glenys Stacey, the chief inspector of probation, said that officers with such a large caseload would have difficulty providing an effective service.

It was inexplicable how telephone supervision of low and medium-risk

offenders had been allowed to occur under the banner of "innovation" in the justice system, she added.

Her annual report is highly critical of the outcome of Chris Grayling's partial privatisation of the probation service in 2014. She said that it had resulted in a "two-tier, fragmented" system that was failing to bring innovation to the task of overseeing offenders.

Mr Grayling split the probation service when justice secretary into 21 privately run community rehabilitation companies (CRCs), which manage low and medium-risk offenders, and a state-run National Probation Service supervising dangerous criminals.

The seven-year contract was valued at £3.7 billion but the overhaul has run into trouble with the companies struggling to restructure probation services. Some are facing financial difficulties.

About 260,000 offenders a year are under probation supervision, with a majority managed by private companies such as Interserve, MTC Novo and Sodexo Justice Services.

Dame Glenys highlighted in her

report how some offenders managed by private companies had only one meeting with a probation worker before being placed on telephone monitoring.

Some CRC operating models allowed for up to four in ten individuals to be supervised remotely, but she said that face-to-face work was vital.

In one instance a man given a community order after being convicted of supplying class A drugs was charged with an offence of wounding while he was being managed by phone calls.

Dame Glenys said: "I find it inexplicable that, under the banner of innovation, these developments were allowed. We should all be concerned, given the rehabilitation opportunities missed, and the risks to the public if individuals are not supervised".

Richard Garside, director of the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies, said: "This really grim report will come as little surprise to those who warned the government against its ill-conceived privatisation of probation prior to the 2015 general election. Active sabotage would look much the same."

Peers reject attack on press freedom

Matthew Moore Media Correspondent

Controversial legislation that would have made it harder for journalists to expose wrongdoing by criminals and corrupt politicians was rebuffed last night, after senior peers spoke up in defence of press freedom.

The "repressive" amendment to the Data Protection Bill would have had a "chilling effect" on the media by allowing the subjects of investigations to obstruct publication, the House of Lords heard.

Critics of the press were accused of attempting to "hijack" the bill to limit the ability of newspapers to hold the powerful to account. The bill seeks to give individuals more control over their personal information and to penalise companies that misuse private data. It grants exceptions to journalists, academics and artists who handle personal data to expose wrongdoing in the public interest.

The key amendment debated in the

Lords last night would have tightened this exemption, requiring journalists to show that the data they compiled during investigations was "necessary" for publication.

The government's version of the bill grants a broader exemption, covering the handling of data with a "view" to publication.

Baroness Hollins, the crossbench peer who proposed the stricter wording, said that it was necessary to "prevent speculative trawling for stories". However, she agreed to withdraw the amendment, which was opposed by ministers, after a series of prominent peers argued that it would cripple investigative journalism.

Lord Brown of Eaton-under-Heywood, a crossbench peer, said that the amendment would "tip the balance" against journalists and called for a "presumption in favour of freedom of speech".

Public interest journalism such as

The Times' award-winning exposure of Asian sex gangs may not be possible if the amendment was passed, warned Lord Pannick, the crossbench peer, who accused anti-newspaper campaigners of trying to "punish the press for the wrongdoing of some of its members".

Baroness Cavendish of Little Venice, a former associate editor of *The Times*, said that the amendment "created a shift towards a presumption of privacy" and would be a "gift" to vested interests seeking to block investigations.

A separate amendment that would have given the Information Commissioner the power to decide which journalistic codes of conduct were acknowledged by the bill was withdrawn by Labour.

Other amendments requiring newspapers to sign up to Impress, the state-recognised press regulator, in order to benefit from the bill's exemptions were not moved to a vote.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Women more unhappy

for a formal diagnosis. Overall, 19 per cent of adults appear to have a mental illness because of consistent unhappiness, lack of enjoyment and feelings of worthlessness, up a quarter in four years. "Across the age groups, but particularly in the young, it is cause for serious concern for us as a society," Dr Lovett said.

She said that the reasons for rising rates of unhappiness needed to be investigated urgently, looking at economic problems and the role of social media. "The impact of individual suffering and the economic impact are enormous," she added.

Stephen Buckley, of the charity Mind, said: "Thankfully women are more likely to also speak out about their mental health and seek support from services."

Youth mental illness is up almost half since 2012 and the findings confirm a detailed survey last year that reported that one in four young women suffered from a mental health condition, with similar numbers self-harming.

Tom Madders of the charity YoungMinds, said: "We are facing a mental health crisis for children and young people. We know that teenagers are

Analysis

As a society, we have become much more comfortable speaking about mental illness. Depression is no longer the stigmatising label it once was, so one would expect doctors to be seeing more mental illness, even if rates had not changed (Chris Smyth writes).

It is possible that wider acceptance of mental health problems means that we are more likely to own up to our negative feelings. But the findings of the Health Survey for England are similar to a study last year, suggesting that something real is going on.

Social media, millennial "snowflake" attitudes or precarious employment are offered as explanations, but the causes or rising rates of mental illness are yet to be established. If the rates of an infectious disease were rising so quickly, it is difficult to believe that we would be so slow finding out why.

facing a wide range of pressures, including stress at school, bullying, body issues and the added pressure of the 24/7 online world. Girls may also be affected by early sexualisation, and the feeling that their life needs to be as perfect as pictures in newsfeeds."

Jeremy Hunt, the health secretary, hit out at Facebook and other social media giants last week for fuelling mental health problems in children.

Previous data has shown that use of antidepressants has more than doubled over the past decade, with 65 million prescriptions last year, and the survey also finds that 48 per cent of adults are on medication. This includes 24 per of people taking three or more drugs and 5 per cent taking more than eight.

Helen Stokes-Lampard, chairwoman of the Royal College of GPs, said: "High prescription rates shouldn't always be seen as a bad thing... More medications are now available and can increasingly be used to prevent illness and to improve health. We also have a growing, ageing population in the UK so inevitably, more and more patients are living with multiple, long-term conditions, many of which need to be treated with medication. Nevertheless, GPs do strive to explore non-pharmacological treatments where appropriate."