



Education ministers funded by corporate and pro-Israel lobbyists

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education

Keir Starmer's government, true to its [deeply shady form](#) has filled the Department for Education (DfE) with people close to both corporate and pro-Israel lobbyists. And the overlapping right-wing network flows from old Blairites like [Peter Mandelson](#) and [Jim Murphy](#) to the more recent Starmerites at [Labour Together](#)

Electoral Commission statistics show us just how much influence dodgy lobbyists have in the DfE today.

The rot of Blair, Mandelson, Murphy, and Labour Together

New Labour corporate cronies – from Tony Blair to Mandelson and Murphy – just refuse to go away. But it's the shadowy lobbying and fundraising networks around them that we really need to pay more attention to. Because they have increasingly engulfed and captured our political system – particularly under Starmer's rule.

The sleaze surrounding Mandelson isn't just newsworthy because of his friendship with infamous paedophile Jeffrey Epstein and the Starmer government's indifferent insistence on bringing him back into frontline politics anyway. We need to talk about him because of the misanthropic rot in UK politics that he represents.

Mandelson [rose in the 1980s and 1990s](#) to become a [central architect](#) of the New Labour project. He [embodied its cosy relationship with capitalism](#). And despite numerous scandals, [party elites kept bringing him back](#). Only Jeremy Corbyn's leadership of Labour consigned him to the [sidelines](#) where he [proudly schemed against him](#).

As [Margaret Thatcher](#) said, [Tony Blair](#)'s corruption of traditional Labour values was her [greatest achievement](#). She had [shifted the political goalposts](#) normalising the corporate capture of UK politics that Blair and Mandelson would happily embrace. [Uber-Blairite](#) [Jim Murphy](#) also joined that mission.

Mandelson may not have openly overseen Labour Together's efforts to destroy Corbyn and force the [empty vessel](#) of [Keir Starmer](#) on the country. But [his protege Morgan McSweeney](#) proudly took on the New Labour cause of hollowing out the party so billionaire interests could take centre stage.

As Murphy pledged at a [2023 event](#) Starmer's Labour would [usher in](#)

The first private sector government in Labour's history

The Israel connection

A key part of [the billionaire class's cause](#) in the West is [backing colonial brutality](#) and exploitation, with Israel as a prime example. [The overlap between dodgy politicians getting money from both corporate and pro-Israel sources](#) [was prominent among them](#) just as people like [Mandelson](#) had been before him.

Mandelson's Global Counsel lobbying firm had prominent [pro-Israel clients like Palantir](#) and [lobbied Israel](#) via an event of major Israel lobby group [ELNET](#)

Murphy's [Arden Strategies](#) meanwhile, has represented arms giant [Northrop Grumman](#) [one of many arms suppliers to Israel](#)

Labour Together has clear [pro-Israel links](#) and [several pro-Israel lobbyists](#) have [funded the group](#)

After Labour had basically been [a lobbyist-free zone](#) under Jeremy Corbyn, Starmer (essentially a creation of lobby power) [opened the floodgates back up](#). This helped Arden in particular to [grow massively](#) under Starmer's Labour leadership.

Labour Together, Mandelson, and Arden have overlapped. [Mandelson appeared at Arden events](#). And [Wes Streeting \(who got money from Labour Together funders\) passed information on from Murphy to Mandelson](#). Arden has faced particular scrutiny for [offering corporate access](#) to people in Starmer's regime.

Lobbyists and Starmer's Department for Education

Ruling classes logically understand the importance of controlling education systems. And at a time when young people have been particularly [vocal opponents](#) of Israel's [genocide](#) in Gaza, there has unsurprisingly been a [strong institutional effort to suppress the resistance of both educators and students](#)

Lobbyists for both corporations and genocidal apartheid states, meanwhile, clearly have the ear of politicians working in the DfE.

1) Education secretary Bridget Phillipson's close relationship with the lobbyists

Education secretary Bridget Phillipson for example, is a prominent voice on the Labour right. She helped to coordinate Labour Together projects, and got money from key Labour Together funders David Sainsbury and Francesca Perrin. She also got money from Murphy and has happily linked up with Arden.

Phillipson is a proud Friend of Israel and its backers including Luke Akehurst and his Labour First group. Lobby group ELNET even funded Phillipson's staffers to travel to Israel (She's one of the only Labour MPs to get so much money from ELNET.)

Phillipson has unsurprisingly backed lobby efforts to politicise schools in favour of Israel. And the government has given Israel lobbyist Natascha Engel's Palace Yard Events the task of tackling antisemitism in education.

Palace Yard donated £32,000 to Labour Friends of Israel vice-chair Jo White (also the wife of pro-Israel agitator John Mann) in 2025. Other pro-Israel lobbyists have also donated to White, including several funders of Labour Together.

2) Children and families minister Josh MacAlister

Josh MacAlister became an MP in 2024. And that was seemingly because a large number of powerful backers wanted him in parliament.

MacAlister received, for example, donations from:

- Lord Roger Liddle who had previously donated to Progressive Britain (the only organisation the Electoral Commission shows Peter Mandelson donating to). Other Progressive Britain backers included Labour Together's Lord David Sainsbury, the Policy Network (also linked to Mandelson), Lord Matthew Oakeshott, Tony Blair and other backers of the Labour right.
- Labour Together, along with its funders David Sainsbury and Danny Luhde-Thompson
- Matthew Oakeshott
- David Claydon (another backer of prominent Labour right figures).

Additionally, MacAlister hosted a fundraising event which had Arden Strategies as a sponsor. Numerous MPs got donations from Arden under the amount of £1,500 which meant they didn't have to officially declare it. And as *Open Democracy* has explained

Fundraisers [like Arden ones] are a key site for lobbyists to build connections not just with these potential future MPs and ministers, but also with senior party figures.

In 2025, MacAlister also became a [trade envoy to Brazil](#) the [biggest economy in Latin America](#)

His [partner](#) Matthew Hood, who [advised the Tories](#) and got [government funds](#) during the pandemic for his online teaching academy, got [a job from ex-health secretary Wes Streeting in 2025](#). This was despite having [no experience in the health sector](#)

3) Other education ministers

School standards minister [Georgia Gould](#)

- Is a [member](#) of Progressive Britain and [pro-Israel lobby group](#) the Jewish Labour Movement.
- Has a partner who's a [lobbyist](#)
- Got [money](#) from [Labour Together funder](#) and [Israel lobbyist](#) Trevor Chinn.
- Got a [donation](#) from Starmer supporter [Gail Rebuck](#)

[Veteran Blairite](#) and [skills minister](#) [Jacqui Smith](#) has [strong links](#) to the [corporate lobby](#) having worked at Flint Glass, which is part of the revolving door business for [people who've been close](#) to the likes of Starmer).

[Early education minister](#) [Olivia Bailey](#) has received [money](#) from:

- [Labour Together funders](#) [Trevor Chinn](#) and [Fiona MacTaggart](#)
- Former Labour [right-winger turned banking lobbyist](#) [Chuka Umunna](#)
- Wes Streeting backer [Linda Riley](#)
- Streeting and Labour First backer [Kevin Craig](#)

Get lobbyists out of our education system!

The UK education system has had many years now of [underfunding](#) and [backdoor privatisation](#). But our politicians, with the help of the dodgy lobbyists behind them, are making it clear that the billionaire class is in control.

If we want the interests of our future generations to matter more than the interests of the billionaire class, we need to overturn the current situation completely. We need to get lobbyists out of the education department and government for good.

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