

[News story: CMA launches court action against Care UK](#)

Last December, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) told Care UK, one of the UK's largest care home providers, that it must refund over 1,600 residents who were charged a compulsory upfront 'administration' fee of as much as £3,000 or else face legal action.

The CMA believes the care home provider was breaking consumer protection law by requiring a substantial non-refundable administration fee from residents for which they received no services or products in return. It also believes that the company's description of the charge, and what it was for, was misleading and that residents were told about the fee too late in the admission process.

Whilst Care UK has stopped charging this fee following CMA intervention, it has not agreed to refund any residents. As a result, the CMA has issued court proceedings and is now seeking a court order to secure refunds for those affected. Ultimately, only a court can decide whether any conduct breaches consumer protection law.

The CMA will argue that in charging these administration fees, Care UK used contract terms and practices that were unfair and contrary to consumer protection law. The CMA will also argue that Care UK should be prevented from charging these – or similar fees – in the future.

The CMA's [consumer law investigation into care homes](#) has already led to positive changes in the sector, including residents receiving [£2 million in compensation](#) from one of the UK's major care home providers for paying upfront compulsory fees and Care UK reducing the length of time for which it charges fees after a resident's death.

In November 2018, the CMA issued comprehensive advice [to care homes](#) to help them understand their responsibilities under consumer protection law, as well as an [open letter](#) urging them to review their practices in light of the guidance immediately. Care homes should make sure that their contract terms and business practices are in line with this advice.

[Press release: Name of British built Mars rover revealed](#)

The name was revealed this morning by Science Minister Chris Skidmore and British European Space Agency (ESA) Astronaut Tim Peake in the 'Mars Yard' at

Airbus Defence and Space UK in Stevenage, where the rover is being built.

Chris Skidmore, UK Science Minister said:

It is a tremendously fitting tribute that the rover has been named after Rosalind Franklin as she helped us understand life on Earth and now her namesake will do the same on Mars.

Just as Rosalind Franklin overcame many obstacles during her career, I hope 'Rosalind the rover' will successfully persevere in this exciting adventure, inspiring generations of female scientists and engineers to come.

This is a big moment for British science and through our modern Industrial Strategy we are embracing this moment as part of our ambition to be the world's most innovative economy, creating opportunities for business through science.

Dr Alice Bunn, International Director, UK Space Agency said:

Rosalind Franklin is one of science's most influential women, and her part in the discovery of the structure of DNA was truly groundbreaking.

It's fitting that the robot bearing her name will search for the building blocks of life on Mars, as she did so on Earth through her work on DNA.

Over a third of the science instruments used in the ExoMars mission are led by women.

The UK Space Agency is the second largest European contributor to the ESA-Roscosmos ExoMars mission, having invested €287 million in the mission and £14 million on the instruments. This, in addition to successful negotiations with ESA, secured key mission contracts for the UK space sector.

'Rosalind Franklin' was chosen by a panel of experts from a shortlist submitted by the public, following a naming competition opened in July last year in which nearly 36,000 people responded. Competition entrants that guessed the final name were invited to the naming ceremony at Airbus where they met astronaut Tim Peake and had a tour of the facility.

Tim Peake, British ESA Astronaut said:

This rover will scout the Martian surface equipped with next-generation instruments – a fully-fledged automated laboratory on Mars. With it, we are building on our European heritage in robotic exploration, and at the same time devising new technologies.

Johann-Dietrich 'Jan' Wörner Director General, European Space Agency said:

This name reminds us that it is in the human genes to explore. Science is in our DNA, and in everything we do at ESA. Rosalind the rover captures this spirit and carries us all to the forefront of space exploration.

Colin Paynter, Managing Director Airbus Defence and Space UK said:

Integration of the ExoMars rover, or rather Rosalind, has started here in Stevenage and the teams are now working round the clock in the sterile cleanroom to make sure she will be ready to fly next year.

ExoMars is the culmination of our industry experience over the last half a century where we have worked alongside academia and agencies to push the boundaries in space both for satellites and missions to other planets.

In November experts meeting at the National Space Centre in Leicester chose Oxia Planum near the Martian equator as the landing site for Rosalind due to its geology and the likelihood of finding signs of life.

The Government's modern Industrial Strategy is backing businesses to succeed by increasing investment in science, because countries that invest in ideas create more opportunities for business. The ambition is for the UK be the world's most innovative economy – and the development of the ExoMars rover for the UK is a part of this ambition.

Rosalind Franklin (1920-1958)

Rosalind Elsie Franklin was a British biophysicist, physicist, chemist, biologist and X-ray crystallographer who made contributions to the understanding of the fine molecular structures of DNA, RNA, viruses, coal and graphite. She went to Newnham College, Cambridge in 1938 and passed her finals in 1941, but was only awarded a degree titular as women were not entitled to degrees at that time. She received a PhD from Ohio University in 1945.

Franklin is best known for her work on the X-ray diffraction images of DNA. Her data was a part of the data used to formulate Crick and Watson's 1953 hypothesis regarding the structure of DNA. Unpublished drafts of her papers show that she had determined the overall B-form of the DNA helix. Her work supported the hypothesis of Watson and Crick and was published third in the series of three DNA Nature articles. After finishing her portion of the DNA work, Franklin led pioneering work on the tobacco mosaic and polio viruses. Franklin died from ovarian cancer at the age of 37, four years before Crick, Watson and Wilkins were awarded the Nobel Prize in 1962 for their work on DNA. Franklin was unable to receive the prize as Nobel Prizes cannot be

awarded posthumously, but she received no mention in the acceptance speeches. Although Franklin's contribution to the 'discovery' of DNA is now widely recognised, there remains a lingering sense that her contribution was unjustly overlooked and undervalued. Her contribution was not recognised in many science books until the 1990s. Courtesy of the Royal Society

The ESA ExoMars Mission

The rover is part of the ExoMars programme, a joint endeavour between ESA and the Russian State Space Corporation, Roscosmos.

The main aims of ExoMars is to examine the geological environment on Mars and search for evidence of environments that may have once, and perhaps could still, support life. It will also assist in preparing for other robotic missions, including a Mars Sample Return mission, and possible future human exploration. Data from the mission will also provide invaluable input for broader studies of Martian geochemistry, environmental science and exobiology – the search for evidence of life on other planets.

As the first European rover to traverse the surface of Mars, Rosalind Franklin will uniquely drill down to two metres into the Martian surface allowing the rover's scientific instruments to sample and analyse the soil, determine its mineral content and composition, and search for evidence of whether past environments could once have harboured life.

The rover will roam around the Martian surface by using electrical power generated from its solar arrays. The rover's software will have a degree of 'intelligence' and autonomy to make certain decisions on the ground and will navigate using optical sensors.

The rover will relay data to Earth through the Trace Gas Orbiter, a spacecraft searching for tiny amounts of gases in the Martian atmosphere that might be linked to biological or geological activity since 2016.

UK mission content

Airbus Defence and Space in Stevenage is leading the build of the rover while the UCL Mullard Space Science Laboratory is leading on a key instrument known as the PanCam, a high-resolution 3D camera which will be used to look at the terrain and rocks to try to detect signs of life.

The University of Leicester and Teledyne e2v are working on the Raman Spectrometer with STFC RAL Space providing some of the electronics, including the data processing board.

Images

[ExoMars rover](#)

[Size of the ExoMars mission](#)

Statement to parliament: Smart ticketing on the rail network

In November 2017 in our [Strategic vision for rail](#), the Department for Transport set out ambitious plans for the roll out of smart ticketing across the network, with the aim of making it more convenient for passengers to buy and receive their train tickets. Over a year later, we have made real progress. Every franchise offers smart cards and/or barcodes and smart tickets are available across almost all of the network.

We now want to go further. Our ambition is to ensure that across regional and urban commuter areas smart ticketing can deliver the kind of pay-as-you-go (PAYG) structure that is used in London, to make journeys easier and smoother for passengers.

In the north of England, the government has allocated £150 million to the multi-modal PAYG programme already being progressed by Transport for the North and, in London, Oyster ticketing already offers seamless PAYG travel. However, there is demand for PAYG to be deployed more widely, so today we begin consulting on the feasibility of delivering PAYG to an expanded area across the south-east of England. This is just a first step, and we will continue to work with other areas to assess opportunities to roll out PAYG.

The [consultation](#) offers the travelling public, business, local authorities and others the opportunity to have their say on how the system could operate and where it could extend to. We are aware that there are views on the appropriate ticketing systems and the way the fares structure could be organised to complement pay as you go travel, these issues are also being considered in the consultation.

Press release: Government sets out new vision for legal support

- Post Implementation Review of legal aid reforms
- New Action Plan to transform legal support
- New Review of legal aid means tests

Measures announced in the Legal Support Action Plan respond directly to evidence heard during a wide-ranging, year-long review of the changes to legal aid made by the Coalition Government in 2013 under the Legal Aid,

Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (LASPO). These reforms aimed to take the legal aid system back to its initial intention – to ensure public funding would remain sustainable by refocusing resources on those who most need it.

The new vision focuses on the individual and prioritises early intervention – giving people the breadth of support they need to solve problems quickly and easily, in many cases before they become entangled in the legal system or need legal representation.

An investment of up to £5million in developing innovative technologies and testing new methods of delivering support will make sure that people can access the right help in the best way for them, and that taxpayers' money is spent on what works best. An additional £3 million will also be invested to support those representing themselves through the court system.

Justice Minister Lucy Frazer, said:

Legal aid will continue to play an important role and we are committed to ensuring people can access the help they need into the future.

However, in seeking to bolster legal aid as a key part of helping people with a diverse range of problems, we are clear that there is much to do aside from legal aid, so we are emphasising the need for new technologies and new ideas to catch people early, before their problems escalate to the courtroom.

We have carefully considered the responses in this review and will expand the scope of legal aid to cover new areas of family law, launch a review of legal aid eligibility thresholds, invest up to £5 million in delivering innovative services and test new methods of support to help people resolve their problems quickly and easily, in the way that best works for them.

More than 100 groups and individuals from across the justice system were engaged during the Post Implementation Review (PIR) of the legal aid reforms. A key point of concern raised during this process was the ability of individuals to access legal aid for civil and family matters.

Today's Action Plan responds to the evidence heard and includes taking immediate action to ensure vulnerable people, particularly children, can access legal aid when it is needed by:

- Reviewing the thresholds for legal aid entitlement and wider eligibility criteria – this will ensure that in circumstances where it is necessary, legal aid continues being accessible to those who need it most;

- Amending the Exceptional Case Funding process to improve timeliness and making it easier to access – this will make it easier for people to access legal aid for cases which are not generally in scope, but where there is a risk of a breach of Human Rights and a lawyer is required; and
- Expanding the scope of legal aid to include legal aid for non-asylum immigration matters for separated migrant children; and to cover all Special Guardianship Orders in private family law cases; and removing the means test for those with parental responsibility to oppose placement or adoption orders in family law proceedings – responding to evidence from the PIR, we will ensure legal aid is available for these proceedings

Last year the Government spent £30 million a week (£1.6 billion per year) funding legal services for those who needed help and is committed to ensuring the system remains sustainable into the future. However, the review also confirmed that publicly funded representation is not always the best way to help people resolve their problems.

The Action Plan is the first step towards overhauling the legal support system; promoting early intervention to resolve problems before they escalate, drawing together the full and diverse range of legal support already being delivered and developing innovative services to help people access justice at the right time and in the right way for them.

This includes:

- Investing up to £5m in innovative forms of legal support, harnessing the power of the UK's thriving LawTech sector to modernise and expand the services on offer. Thorough testing of innovative new solutions will ensure funding is spent most effectively.
- Doubling funding for the Litigants in Person Support Strategy to £3m for the next two years, to ensure those representing themselves in court understand the process and are better supported through it;
- Ensuring early intervention by delivering a series of pilots to explore new ways of delivering legal support and enhanced services for people in need. This will include testing new approaches to signposting support early in the process; piloting and testing legal support hubs; and bringing together existing legal support services; and
- Piloting the expansion of legal aid to cover early legal advice in a specific area of social welfare law. We will test the impact of early legal advice and use the evidence to inform our future consideration of early intervention.

Alongside the review, the Ministry of Justice has also published the final report into the review of legal aid provision for inquests. Following engagement with a wide range of stakeholders and a public call for evidence, changes will be made including:

- Ensuring that inquests are more sympathetic to the needs of bereaved families and that families are more able to participate, with all parties clear about what is expected of them throughout the process; and

- improving guidance and advice to increase understanding and awareness of the availability of legal aid for inquests.

We will be looking into further options for the funding of legal support at inquests where the state has state-funded representation. To do this we will work closely with other Government Departments.

Meanwhile, a review of criminal legal aid payment schemes has also already been announced to ensure criminal defence remains a sustainable and attractive career.

The Government is committed to continuing work with the sector and other government departments, building on the evidence heard over the review process, to ensure that legal support remains available for those who need it, both now and in a future more modern and efficient justice system.

Notes to editors:

1. In 2017/18, the government spent £1.6bn on funding legal services for those who needed it.
2. The [Legal Support Action Plan](#) is available online, alongside the full [PIR document](#).
3. The Post Implementation Review of changes made to controlling costs of civil litigation under [LASPO Part 2](#) is also available online

[Statement to parliament: Tyres and vehicle safety](#)

Colleagues across the House have expressed concern about the potential dangers posed by ageing tyres. This is also a matter of great concern to the government, and following my [statement to the House of 23 November 2018](#), I want to update the House further on the measures we are taking to address it.

Colleagues will recall that in 2013 the government issued [guidance advising bus operators against fitting tyres over 10 years old to the front axles of their vehicles](#). This has proven extremely effective. Since June 2017 136,263 vehicles have been checked by cat annual test and 82 have been found to be non-compliant, a rate of 0.06%.

However, we have been determined to go further. In November 2018 the government updated the [Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency guidance on maintaining roadworthiness](#), to the effect that tyres of 10 years of age or older should not be used on the front or steering axles of heavy goods vehicles as well as buses and coaches.

All DVSA encounters with GB heavy vehicles, including buses and coaches,

identified as using older tyres will be followed up. Between 23 November and 25 January, DVSA carried out 7,500 enforcement checks and found 14 vehicles using older tyres. This reinforces the picture already built up of very low levels of infringement. The changes to maintenance best practice now provide a clear basis for referring cases to Traffic Commissioners when guidance has been disregarded.

The DfT and its agencies continue to work together to ensure vehicle operators understand how to maintain the safety and roadworthiness of their vehicles, including their tyres, and to enforce any non-compliance.

This strengthening of the roadworthiness guidance followed amendments to the MOT and annual test requirement in 2018 to tighten the control of the use of any tyres exhibiting deep cuts to the tread area. These changes, which apply to all road vehicles subject to MOT tests, were developed in response to new evidence obtained from a DfT funded collision investigation. This indicated that structural damage to tyres was possible due to corrosion caused by water ingress.

As a result, from 20th May 2018 any vehicle found with tyres that have deep cuts will fail their MOT test. This is another example of how the DfT continue to make improvements to vehicle maintenance requirements based on available evidence, so as to improve roadworthiness and safety of vehicles on UK roads.

In addition to these measures, the government has also commissioned pioneering new research to strengthen our understanding of the effect of age on the integrity of road vehicle tyres. No other country in the world has done work of this nature – we are pushing the boundaries of technical research in order to inform policy and ensure the safety of all road users.

The present work has been commissioned by the Department for Transport and is led by the UK's Transport Research Laboratory. The project has enlisted expertise from a leading laboratory in the United States, Smithers Rapra, to undertake testing and analysis to find out more about the structural qualities of those tyres. Thirty one used tyres of different ages, taken from the UK market, have been sent to this laboratory. The sample tyres are all from a single manufacturer and have been assembled so that accurate comparisons can be made. This analysis will be used to address the question of how ageing affects tyres' integrity. I understand that it will be the first of its kind to be published using this methodology.

The government is committed to evidence-based policymaking, in order to ensure the safety of all road users. Stakeholders and the public expect the government to act on complete and appropriate evidence, and decisions would otherwise risk legal challenge by affected parties. As I informed the House on November 23, we expect the outcome of this research to be reported in the spring. It will be used alongside existing evidence to inform government policy.