

[Crime news: extension to the 2017 Standard Crime Contract](#)

The 2017 Standard Crime Contract will be extended for a year (until 31 March 2022) in accordance with clause 2.3 of the Contract for Signature, and further to the [Headline Intentions](#) published in August 2020.

After carefully considering our approach for the 2022 crime contract against the backdrop of uncertainty and the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak, we recognise that launching a tender in April – as we had originally planned – would add further pressure during an already challenging period.

We are therefore offering existing providers a further six month extension to the contract (until 30 September 2022).

Contract background

The 2017 Standard Crime Contract is the current contract between the Legal Aid Agency (LAA) and providers for the provision of face-to-face criminal legal aid in England and Wales.

Contract timeline

The 2017 Standard Crime Contract commenced on 1 April 2017 with an initial term of three years (the Contract Period) with an option to extend it by up to two years.

In accordance with the contract terms, and further to the Headline Intentions we published in August 2020, the LAA will now extend the contract for a further year, until 31 March 2022.

This contract extension is automatic – existing providers do not need to do anything and will receive a formal notification letter.

Offer of further six month extension

In addition, existing providers will be offered a further six month extension to the Contract Period (until 30 September 2022).

All providers must respond by email as specified in the Contract Extension letter by 12pm on Monday 8 March 2021.

Contract extension letter

All providers will be sent a notice letter via email detailing the above extensions.

These letters will be sent on the 17 February 2021 to the email address of the person you have advised us is the Contract Liaison Manager for your organisation.

If you have not received your letter by Friday 19 February 2021, please email crime.contracts@justice.gov.uk and someone will respond to you as soon as possible (Please check your junk folder first before emailing).

Further information

[Versions of the Standard Crime Contract 2017 documents are available on GOV.UK](#)

[Headline Intentions](#)

[Ministry of Justice statement in fee-paid judicial litigation: February 2021](#)

[unable to retrieve full-text content]A further update on work MOJ is doing to respond to the CJEU judgment of November 2018 in O'Brien No.2 and the Supreme Court's judgment in Miller of December 2019.

[Marico Marine wins ADMIRALTY Offshore Renewable Energy Innovation Challenge](#)

The UK Hydrographic Office (UKHO) and Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas) have announced Marico Marine as the winner of the third ADMIRALTY Marine Innovation Programme challenge.

Led by the UKHO's Research, Design and Innovation team, the programme has given innovators and start-ups the chance to develop solutions that solve some of the world's most pressing challenges when it comes to our oceans. For the programme's third innovation challenge, which was run in partnership with Cefas, participants were asked to demonstrate how marine geospatial data could help identify new areas for offshore renewable energy infrastructure.

In response to this challenge, [Marico Marine](#) developed a geospatial constraints mapping toolkit that helps developers and regulators to understand the impact shipping could have on projects early in the planning process. By combining ADMIRALTY data with advanced GIS analysis and professional mariner expertise, the toolkit will allow the identification of potential hotspots within proposed project boundaries.

The impact projects could have on shipping and wider maritime navigation is a key consideration for consenting authorities, yet it is often considered late in the licence application process. Marico Marine's solution will make it commercially viable for shipping and wider maritime navigation implications to be considered at an earlier stage, potentially saving millions of pounds of investment.

Commenting on the solution, Marico Marine's UK Director, André Cocuccio said:

We are extremely proud to be selected by the UKHO as winners of this innovation challenge and have ambitious plans for the solution in the offshore renewables market.

Through this partnership, the opportunity for Marico to develop an alpha product supported by expertise and authoritative data supplied by the UKHO is an exciting one. Shipping and navigation is a complex receptor to evaluate, and our product is targeted at reducing the likelihood that proposed projects are rejected on these grounds. We are looking forward to the months ahead and developing a powerful product with the UKHO that we hope will have a real impact in the industry.

Commenting on Marico Marine's winning entry, Mark Casey Head of the UK Hydrographic Office's Research, Design and Innovation team said:

I'd like to congratulate Marico Marine on developing this fantastic solution.

As we enter the UN's 'Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development', we need to find new ways to grow our marine economy whilst reducing our impact on the environment.

Ocean renewables can help us to achieve this balance by reducing our dependency on damaging fossil fuels and helping communities around the world to access a more sustainable source of energy.

Marico Marine's solution will help to grow this sector by giving developers access to marine geospatial data that helps to identify the best locations for new offshore energy infrastructure. We look forward to working with Marico Marine over the coming months and will continue to collaborate with partners on further projects that help to build safer, more secure and thriving oceans.

Find out more

You can find out more about the programme on the ADMIRALTY website:

Landmark proposals to strengthen free speech at universities

Tougher legal measures to strengthen free speech and academic freedom at universities in England have been announced by the Education Secretary today (16 February), to stamp out unlawful 'silencing' on campuses.

Following an increasing number of cases of individuals being silenced, the Education Secretary has warned of a 'chilling effect' where students and staff feel they cannot express themselves freely.

The [proposed measures](#) deliver on a manifesto commitment, and include a new free speech condition placed on higher education providers in order to be registered in England and access public funding. The regulator, the Office for Students, would have the power to impose sanctions, including financial penalties, for breaches of the condition.

The strengthened legal duties would also extend to Students Unions, which for the first time would have to take steps to ensure that lawful free speech is secured for their members and others, including visiting speakers.

In addition, a new legal measure would enable individuals to seek compensation through the courts if they suffer loss as a result of breach of the free speech duties – such as being expelled, dismissed or demoted.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Free speech underpins our democratic society and our universities have a long and proud history of being places where students and academics can express themselves freely, challenge views and cultivate an open mind.

But I am deeply worried about the chilling effect on campuses of unacceptable silencing and censoring. That is why we must strengthen free speech in higher education, by bolstering the existing legal duties and ensuring strong, robust action is taken if these are breached.

Under the plans, the Education Secretary would also appoint a new Free Speech and Academic Freedom Champion to investigate potential infringements, such as no-platforming speakers or dismissal of academics, and higher education providers would be legally required to actively promote free speech.

The new Champion would be appointed to the board of the Office for Students and would be able to investigate potential infringements of the new registration condition on freedom of speech and academic freedom in higher

education. The registration condition would work alongside strengthened legal duties on free speech and academic freedom and the Champion would also be able to recommend that the Office for Students imposes fines.

The [policy paper](#) also includes Government expectations that go beyond the minimum legal duties, setting out what universities should aspire to.

The Government will continue to work alongside the sector on guidance and further research, and the next steps for legislation will be set out in due course.

Tom Simpson, Associate Fellow at Policy Exchange, and an Associate Professor of Philosophy and Public Policy, at the Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford, said:

This policy paper by the Department of Education is a very welcome step towards ensuring that viewpoint diversity is protected in British universities.

As Cambridge University's recent Senate House vote shows, there is a substantial majority of academics who favour academic freedom. The problem, as Policy Exchange's research has explored, is that a very online culture allows the views of a minority to exert disproportionate influence on administrators, and to exert a chilling effect on other academics. Promoting a norm of political non-discrimination, and incentivising administrators to do what they are already legally obliged to do, is a crucial step towards ensuring a culture of free discourse in our universities.

[The Secretary of State has appointed Professor Geoff Thompson MBE DL and Ama Agbeze MBE to the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games Organising Committee](#)

News story

Professor Geoff Thompson MBE DL has been appointed as Deputy Chair and Ama Agbeze MBE as a Board Member of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games Organising Committee until 30 June 2023. Ama will serve as Chair of the

Committee's Athletes Advisory sub-committee.



Professor Geoff Thompson MBE DL

Geoff Thompson is a former five time world karate champion and sports administrator, which has seen him deliver social and human initiatives with specific emphasis on equality, diversity and inclusion. He is Founder of Youth Charter, a UK-based international charity and UN NGO. Geoff has also held a number of private and public board appointments including: London Legacy Development Corporation, Muhammad Ali Center and is Chair of the Independent Advisory Panel of the PFA.

He has delivered strategies within the bidding, hosting and legacy of major games including the Manchester 2002 and Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games. Geoff was awarded an MBE for his services to sport.

Ama Agbeze MBE

Ama gained her first cap for the England Roses in 2001 and captained the Team England netball team to its historic gold medal at the 2018 Gold Coast Commonwealth Games in Australia. She received an MBE for her services to netball in 2019.

An in depth knowledge of international sport combined with her legal qualification provided the basis, in recent years, for her taking roles as ambassador, trustee and/or board member to various charitable organisations and Commonwealth Games England. In the corporate space Ama delivers motivational talks focussing on leadership, development, team cohesion and striving for success. She has used her experience and platform to be a thought leader in racial equality, youth, and female empowerment. Ama also provides coaching centred around body positivity and participation.

These roles are not remunerated. The appointments have been made in accordance with the [Cabinet Office's Governance Code on Public Appointments](#). The appointments process is regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments. The Government's Governance Code requires that any significant political activity undertaken by an appointee in the last five years is declared. This is defined as holding office, public speaking, making a recordable donation or candidature for election. Professor Thompson and Ama Agbeze have not declared any activity.

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