

Civil news: opportunity to tender for education advice contracts

News story

A revised tender opportunity for Civil Legal Advice (CLA) specialist telephone advice services in the education category is now inviting bids.



A tender opened on 4 February 2021 for specialist telephone advice contracts in the education category of law.

The Legal Aid Agency (LAA) is seeking to award up to 5 contracts with work being offered in 'lots' of 20% of the total work. Applicants may tender to deliver one, two or a maximum of 3 lots.

We want to encourage tenders from organisations that have the skills and resources in place to deliver Civil Legal Advice (CLA) contracts at short notice and have made a number of changes to encourage sustainable tenders.

Changes include amending the service operational hours and increasing the maximum hourly rate at which applicants may tender to deliver the work.

The LAA recognises that there may be some organisations interested in delivering some telephone advice but may be unable to either meet the minimum quality standards or be able to deliver 20% of the contract value.

We will therefore also accept variant bids from applicants wishing to deliver a lower proportion of work. This includes where a bidder is unable to meet the minimum contract requirements in full.

Variant bids will only be considered if we are unable to award 100% of the contract work to organisations bidding for lots.

Timescales

The deadline for submitting tenders is 5pm on 25 February 2021.

Services under the new contracts will begin on 1 April 2021.

Where can I find out more?

Detailed information on the procurement opportunity is available in the 'Information for Applicants' document on our tender pages.

Further information

[Specialist Telephone Advice in Education and Discrimination from April 2021 e-tendering](#)

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[Latest monitoring data confirms safety of COVID-19 vaccines](#)



- Data published from UK's independent medicines regulator confirms approved vaccines meet strict regulatory standards for safety
- Vast majority of reported side effects are mild and short lasting, reflecting a normal immune response to vaccines – including a sore arm and fatigue
- The benefits of the COVID-19 vaccines outweigh the risks

Routine safety monitoring and analysis of the approved COVID-19 vaccines by the UK's medicines regulator, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), shows that the safety of these vaccines remains as high as expected from the clinical trial data that supported the approvals. The safety profile of the vaccines remains positive and the benefits continue to far outweigh any known side-effects.

Over 10 million doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech and the Oxford University/AstraZeneca vaccines have been given across the UK and the MHRA has gathered a large amount of safety data. [Data published today](#) shows 22,820 reports of suspected side effects, or an overall reporting rate of 3 in 1,000 doses of vaccine administered from 9 December 2020 to 24 January 2021. This

reassuring data has shown that the vast majority of reported side effects are mild and all are in line with most types of vaccine, including the seasonal flu vaccine. These include sore arms and mild 'flu-like' symptoms, which reflect a normal immune response to vaccines and are short-lasting.

The MHRA has today published its [safety surveillance strategy](#) for monitoring the safety of all UK-approved COVID-19 vaccines. This has been informed by the Government's independent advisory body, the Commission on Human Medicines, and expertise across the UK public health sector.

The MHRA has also published today the first of what will be regular COVID-19 vaccine safety reports. These provide details on the suspected side-effects to the vaccines reported through its safety monitoring system, the Yellow Card scheme. This data has been thoroughly analysed by the MHRA's scientists and safety experts together with all other sources of evidence.

The MHRA is working to actively promote reporting on COVID-19 vaccines from patients and healthcare professionals to the [Coronavirus Yellow Card scheme](#). Anyone who has received the vaccine and thinks they may have suffered a side-effect, even suspected, is encouraged to report it to the MHRA at: coronavirus-yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk.

Safety monitoring of all medicines and vaccines used by the wider UK population is a key role of the MHRA. The safety of COVID-19 vaccines is continually monitored throughout their use in healthcare practice to ensure they remain safe and effective. The regulator does this by identifying and comparing new and emerging data from multiple sources with what it already knows from large-scale clinical trials.

Dr June Raine, MHRA Chief Executive, said:

Vaccines are the most effective way to protect against COVID-19 and save lives and prevent serious complications from this terrible virus.

The data we have collected provides further reassurance that the COVID-19 vaccines are safe and continue to meet the rigorous regulatory standards required for all vaccines. We remain confident that the benefits of these vaccines outweigh any risks.

Our priority is to ensure the public have safe and effective vaccines and we will continue to analyse, monitor and review all the safety data for these vaccines.

I'd like to thank everyone who has reported a potential side effect to us – every report matters.

END

Notes to Editors

- [A report covering adverse reactions to approved COVID-19 vaccines](#)
- [Report of the Commission on Human Medicines Expert Working Group on COVID-19 vaccine safety surveillance](#)
- Anyone can use the Yellow Card scheme to report suspected side effects of medicines, and incidents involving medical devices, and defective or fake medical products.
- Reports can be made on the [Yellow Card reporting site](#), via the mobile app from the [Google Play Store](#) or [Apple App Store](#), via freephone (0800 731 6789, 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday) or by reporting an issue to their healthcare team who can file a report on their behalf. Patients are also advised to contact a healthcare professional if they are worried about their health.
- The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency ('the agency') has three centres. The MHRA, the [National Institute for Biological Standards and Control \(NIBSC\)](#) and the [Clinical Practice Research Datalink \(CPRD\)](#). The agency is an executive agency of the Department of Health and Social Care.
- [The Commission on Human Medicines \(CHM\)](#) advises ministers and the MHRA on the safety, efficacy and quality of medicinal products. The CHM is an advisory non-departmental public body, sponsored by the [Department of Health and Social Care](#).
- The MHRA has statutory responsibility for continuous safety monitoring (pharmacovigilance) following vaccine approval, and in ensuring the balance of benefits and risks remains favourable.
- Public Health England (PHE) has responsibility for surveillance of the immunisation programme including vaccine coverage, the impact on disease and seroprevalence at a population level, monitoring vaccine failures and monitoring attitudes to vaccination.
- The MHRA and PHE work independently from each other, but often collaborate on scientific methods and standards for safety surveillance.

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Last updated 5 February 2021 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 5 February 2021

Added links to the report covering adverse reactions to approved COVID-19 vaccines as well as the Report of the Commission on Human Medicines Expert Working Group on COVID-19 vaccine safety surveillance

2. 5 February 2021

First published.

Birmingham Fraudster Given Prison Sentence

Press release

Deliberately 'targeted' vulnerable couple



A 69 year-old woman who preyed on a couple seeking help with their immigration status, has been given a 19 month prison sentence for fraud.

Mrs Zabun Nissa of Herrick Road, Birmingham, pleaded guilty to two counts of fraud, contrary to Sections 1 and 2 of the Fraud Act 2006 at Birmingham Crown Court in November 2020. On her return to the court on 3 February she was given details of her sentence.

Mrs Nissa befriended the couple , and claimed to work at Birmingham Airport's immigration department. Using this false position to gain their trust she charged the victims £8,450 for immigration work that was never carried out. This included help in obtaining British Citizenship; employment within the immigration department at Birmingham Airport; and visas for other family members to come to the UK and work.

Judge Mukherjee said, "This offending was very mean and very serious. You preyed on a couple who found themselves in a difficult position. You established trust in them – your word in the Pre-Sentencing Report is that you 'targeted' them. They called you 'auntie'. You know how important a title that is. You lied to them from the outset. This was a planned fraud for financial gain.

"It was prolonged, persistent and planned."

Mrs Nissa was previously convicted of similar offences in 2008.

The judge added, "This offending is so serious that only an immediate custodial sentence can be justified."

Speaking about the case, Immigration Services Commissioner John Tuckett said:

“Zabun Nissa allowed people to put their trust and future in her. She took a considerable sum of money from her victims and then avoided them over a significant period of time. These were serious offences, given the circumstances and the amount of money involved, and demonstrates the harm that can be caused by unregulated immigration advisers.”

Notes to the Editor

1. The OISC is an independent public body, established under the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, to regulate the provision of immigration advice and services in the UK.
2. Media queries to Cornelius Alexander, Corporate Communications Business Partner at the OISC via communications@oisc.gov.uk.

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[Government confirms mandatory hotel quarantine to be introduced from 15 February](#)

- Managed Quarantine Facilities to come into effect from 15 February
- Discussions with transport and hospitality industry already underway and commercial specification issued to hotels
- Health Secretary to oversee implementation and to chair new Cabinet sub-committee, working closely with former Vice Chief of Defence Staff, General Sir Gordon Messenger, on government rollout
- Discussions with Australia and New Zealand have taken place to share expertise on quarantining

Building on existing tough measures, the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has confirmed that from 15 February anyone travelling to the UK from a country on the UK’s travel ban list will be required to quarantine in a government-approved facility for a period of 10 days.

On Thursday evening DHSC issued a commercial specification to hotels near ports and airports, asking for proposals on how they can support the delivery of Managed Quarantine Facilities ahead of formal contracts being awarded. General Sir Gordon Messenger will also play an important role in advising the government on the delivery of the programme.

Over the past week, the government has met with stakeholders from across the

aviation, maritime, hotel and hospitality industry, and will now continue to finalise plans to enable implementation from 15 February.

The Health Secretary held discussions with his Australian counterpart on Thursday, and officials will speak with New Zealand officials to share expertise. DHSC has also held a series of roundtables with over 60 companies and industry representatives as the public and private sector work together to reduce transmissions of COVID-19.

Further details will be set out next week on how passengers will be able to book into the designated accommodation facilities.

This comes as the Prime Minister appoints the Health and Social Care Secretary to oversee cross-government efforts to deliver mandatory quarantine and enhanced testing which will help tackle the threats of new variants of COVID-19. A new Cabinet sub-committee, led by the Health and Social Care Secretary, will be attended by a number of senior Cabinet ministers that will play a vital role in delivering the policy. The government is also working closely with the devolved administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as the changes come into effect.

Detailed work is already underway with the Home Office, Department for Transport, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, and other government departments.

A DHSC spokesperson said:

Throughout the pandemic, the government has put in place proportionate measures, informed by the advice of scientists, and that has led to some of the toughest border regimes in the world. It is currently illegal to go on holiday, and passengers travelling to the UK must provide proof of a negative test before they travel, and self-isolate on arrival. With increased police presence at airports and more physical checks at addresses to make sure people are self-isolating, we are taking decisive action.

We are now working at pace to secure the facilities we need to roll out managed quarantine for British nationals returning home from the most high-risk countries, and are rightly engaging with representatives from the hospitality, maritime and aviation industry, and learning from our friends around the world. In the face of new variants, it is important that the government continues to take the necessary steps to protect people and save lives.

These measures build on the [Home Secretary's announcement on 27 January that the government is taking further action for outbound and inbound passengers](#), to minimise travel across international borders and reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

CMA letter to Clydesdale Bank Plc on a breach of the SME Banking Undertakings

Clydesdale Bank plc (Clydesdale Bank) breached the [Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Banking Undertakings](#). Clydesdale Bank required SME customers holding a PCA to open a Business Current Account (BCA) in order to progress their application for a loan under the [Bounce Back Loan Scheme](#) (the Scheme). Clydesdale Bank started offering the loans under the Scheme on 4 May 2020.

Clydesdale Bank has committed to address its breach of the Undertakings by:

- writing to those affected SME customers with a Business Current Account to offer a choice to switch to a fee-free loan servicing account;
- offering SME customers who apply for loans under the Scheme the choice between opening a fee-free loan servicing account or a business current account to apply for a Bounce Back Loan
- informing SME customers that they not required to maintain a Business Current Account in order to retain a Bounce Back Loan; and
- providing one month's advance notice to customers holding Business Current Accounts the charges being imposed.

CMA letter to Clydesdale Bank on its breach of the SME Banking Undertakings 2002.

The Action Plan on this page sets out information on Clydesdale Bank's actions to address the breach.

The 8 banks currently subject to the bundling prohibition are AIB Group (UK) plc; Bank of Ireland; Barclays Bank plc; Clydesdale Bank plc, HSBC Bank plc, Lloyds Banking Group, Danske Bank and NatWest Group plc (formerly the Royal Bank of Scotland Group which includes Ulster Bank Limited in Northern Ireland).