

New courtroom protections for vulnerable victims available nationwide

- Pre-recorded cross-examination now available throughout England and Wales
- Reduces stress for vulnerable victims and witnesses who can give better evidence
- Pilot for victims of sexual and trafficking offences ongoing

New technology which spares vulnerable victims and witnesses the trauma of attending court is now available in every Crown Court across England and Wales.

Available immediately, it allows the likes of children or those who suffer from a debilitating condition to have their cross-examination video-recorded and played during the trial. The recording takes place as close to the time of the offence as possible in order to help memory recall and reduce the stress of giving evidence in a courtroom setting, which many find intimidating.

More than 350 victims and witnesses have benefited from the technology since regional rollouts began earlier this year.

The completion of national implementation comes as a similar process is being piloted for victims of sexual and modern slavery offences at Crown Courts in Liverpool, Leeds, and Kingston-Upon-Thames. Subject to an evaluation, the measure could be introduced at other courts.

Justice Minister, Alex Chalk MP, said:

The court process can be a harrowing experience for vulnerable victims and witnesses.

This technology seeks to minimise stress and ensure they can provide their best evidence, without reducing a defendant's right to a fair trial.

This is part of our efforts to drive improvement for victims at every stage of the justice system.

Andrew Penhale, Chief Crown Prosecutor and CPS lead for Section 28 said:

The CPS is very conscious that being cross-examined at trial is particularly difficult for children and other vulnerable witnesses, many of whom have been exposed to very distressing and unpleasant

crimes.

Waiting for the trial process can inevitably add to their anxiety so the fact this measure can significantly reduce the time they have to wait to give evidence will make a huge difference. In the current circumstances, we know reducing delay is more important than ever.

Dame Vera Baird QC, Victims' Commissioner for England and Wales said:

I very much welcome this national roll-out, ensuring more vulnerable victims and witnesses have the option to pre-record their evidence. Giving evidence and being cross-examined in court can be a distressing and re-traumatising experience. This is especially true for a child or a vulnerable witness. This roll-out will enable more victims to put their experiences behind them sooner, rather than wait in anticipation for the trial which may be many months away.

I congratulate HMCTS and the Ministry of Justice in driving this forward and being so responsive. This has the potential to transform the criminal justice experience for so many vulnerable victims.

Anna Edmundson, NSPCC Head of Policy and Public Affairs said:

This is a welcome development from HMCTS and the Ministry of Justice. The NSPCC has campaigned for the introduction of pre-recorded cross-examination so that young people can give their evidence sooner rather than later and then start to look to the future and rebuild their lives.

Waiting for long periods to take part in court proceedings can be a traumatic experience for young witnesses so this national rollout is an important step towards protecting the best interests of children.

Alongside ensuring young victims and witnesses receive tailored support throughout the process, these changes should mean that children's experiences of the criminal justice system are transformed.

Any decision to pre-record evidence is made by a judge on a case-by case basis.

The move is part of the government's wider efforts to improve the support on offer at every stage of the justice system. These include a new Victims' Code published last week which outlines the key information and level of service

they should receive from the police, courts and other criminal justice agencies.

Meanwhile, more than £76m has been made available to support the most vulnerable during the pandemic – with a further £11m recently provided to help rape and domestic abuse services cope with a spike in demand expected this winter.

Since February 2020, more than 350 recordings have taken place across England and Wales.

Vulnerable witnesses and victims are defined as all child witnesses under 18 and any witness whose quality of evidence is likely to be diminished because they are suffering from a mental disorder or physical disability or has significant impairment of intelligence and social functioning.

Both the defence and prosecution lawyers will be present in court during the pre-recording as will the judge and the defendant.

Pre-recording cross-examination preserves a defendant's right to a fair trial.

Feedback from the courts already operating the system shows that victims felt less stress and that witnesses were better able to recall events.

The full list of crown courts who have commenced pre-recording evidence sessions today are:

- Birmingham Crown Court
- Bournemouth Crown Court
- Cambridge Crown Court
- Coventry Crown Court
- Derby Crown Court
- Grimsby Crown Court
- Hereford Crown Court
- Hove Crown Court
- Isle of Wight Crown Court
- Kingston-Upon-Hull Crown Court
- Lincoln Crown Court
- Luton Crown Court
- Newcastle-upon-Tyne Crown Court
- Nottingham Crown Court
- Peterborough Crown Court
- Shrewsbury Crown Court
- Southend Crown Court
- Stoke-on-Trent Crown Court
- Taunton Crown Court
- Truro Crown Court
- Warwick Crown Court

Pre-recorded video evidence is already available at Crown Courts in Amersham, Aylesbury, Basildon, Bolton, Bradford, Bristol, Burnley, Canterbury,

Caernarfon, Cardiff, Carlisle, Central Criminal Court, Chelmsford, Chester, Croydon, Doncaster, Durham, Exeter, Gloucester, Guildford, Harrow, Inner London, Ipswich, Isleworth, King's Lynn, Kingston-upon-Thames, Lancaster, Leeds, Leicester, Lewes, Liverpool, Maidstone, Manchester Crown Square, Manchester Minshull Street, Merthyr Tydfil, Mold, Newport (Wales), Newcastle Moot Hall, Northampton, Norwich, Oxford, Plymouth, Preston, Portsmouth, Reading, Salisbury, Sheffield, Snaresbrook, Southwark, Southampton, Stafford, St Albans Swansea, Swindon, Teesside, Warrington, Winchester Wolverhampton, Wood Green, Woolwich, Worcester, York.

UK Government and Devolved Administrations Meeting: 21 November 2020

Press release

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster held a discussion with devolved administrations on 21 November 2020 on shared arrangements for the festive period.



The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the First Minister of Scotland, the First Minister of Wales, and the First and Deputy First Ministers of Northern Ireland held a further discussion yesterday on shared arrangements for the festive period.

Welcoming the good progress made by all administrations over the past few days to design a single set of arrangements that can apply across the UK, Ministers reiterated the importance of allowing families and friends to meet in a careful and limited way, while recognising that this will not be a normal festive period and the risks of transmission remain very real.

As such, Ministers endorsed a shared objective of facilitating some limited additional household bubbling for a small number of days, but also emphasised

that the public will be advised to remain cautious, and that wherever possible people should avoid travelling and minimise social contact. In respect of Northern Ireland, Ministers also recognised that people will want to see family and friends across the island of Ireland, and this is the subject of discussions with the Irish Government.

Work is continuing to finalise the arrangements, including relating to travel. The UK Government, Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive hope to conclude this work this week, subject to agreement by each administration.

Published 22 November 2020

[UK response to arrests of human rights workers in Egypt](#)

Government response

The UK is deeply concerned about the arrest of 3 staff members from the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR).



An FCD0 spokesperson said:

The UK is deeply concerned about the arrest of 3 staff members from the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR): Executive Director Gasser Abdel Razek, and employees Mohammed Basheer and Karim Ennarah.

We have been in regular contact with the Egyptian authorities since the arrests took place, and the Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab has raised the issue directly with his Egyptian counterpart. We are working closely with partners in the international community who share our concerns.

All human rights defenders should be able to work without fear of arrest or reprisals.

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UK Government-supported mass Covid-19 testing begins in Merthyr

News story

UK Military provides logistical support for county-wide programme of testing.



Wales's first mass testing programme is being rolled out in Merthyr Tydfil Borough.

Merthyr is the first county in Wales to take part in the UK's mass testing scheme following the recent pilot in Liverpool.

The UK Government-supported mass testing programme will see the use of Lateral Flow Devices which can provide results within around 20-30 minutes. If an individual tests positive via an LFD test, they will then have a swab test and will be asked to return home so they can self-isolate immediately.

The roll-out of mass testing in Merthyr is being carried out with the help of more than 160 UK Military personnel who are supporting local officials set up the mass testing programme rapidly.

All residents will be offered repeat C-19 testing, even if asymptomatic, to help find more positive cases and break the chains of transmission. The first testing site opened at Merthyr Tydfil leisure centre on 21 November with further sites due to open later this month.

Secretary of State for Wales Simon Hart said:

Mass testing is hugely important in our continued fight against the virus and the UK Government has been working night and day to deliver capacity right across the UK.

At the same time, the UK Armed Forces has provided crucial support and additional expertise to our NHS and ambulance service in Wales throughout the pandemic.

Working alongside the local council, Welsh Government and the NHS, the significant support the UK Government is now giving to roll out Wales' first mass-testing programme in Merthyr shows, once again, that we are better tackling the coronavirus united across the four nations of the UK and making the best use of our shared resources.

The programme is being delivered through a partnership between the UK Government, Welsh Government, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council and Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board.

Residents and workers in Merthyr can find out how to access tests by visiting www.merthyr.gov.uk/covidtesting

Published 21 November 2020

[UK secures vital rollover trade deal with Canada and agrees to start negotiating more advanced deal next year](#)

- The agreement paves the way for negotiations to begin in 2021 on a new tailor-made UK-Canada trade deal, with the potential to go further in areas like digital trade, the environment and women's economic empowerment
- Today's agreement also locks in certainty for UK businesses trading goods and services with Canada worth £20 billion

The UK and Canada have locked in their existing trading relationship, worth £20 billion, and agreed to begin negotiating a new more ambitious trade deal as early as next year.

On a video call today (21st November), Prime Minister Boris Johnson and

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, joined by International Trade Secretary Liz Truss and her Canadian counterpart, Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade Mary Ng agreed an 'agreement in principle' to roll over current EU-Canada trading arrangements and begin negotiations on a new, bespoke UK-Canada trade deal in 2021.

Today's agreement to rollover provisions of the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) gives certainty for UK businesses exporting goods and services to Canada worth £11.4 billion. It will support the British automotive manufacturing and food and drink industries which between them provide jobs for more than half a million people across the UK.

Overall, an estimated £42 million tariff burden on UK exports has been saved. The benefits locked in under the agreement reached today include:

- Future zero tariffs on UK car exports to Canada, which were worth £757 million last year, supporting factories and jobs in our communities. Without this agreement, Canada's standard tariffs on cars of 6.1% would apply.
- Tariff-free trade on 98% of goods that can be exported to Canada including beef, fish and seafood and soft drinks.
- UK producers will continue to benefit from zero tariffs on many agricultural and seafood exports including chocolate, confectionary, fruit and vegetables, bread, pastries and fish. Last year the UK exported £344m worth of agri-food goods to Canada.
- Without the continuity agreement, Canadian food products such as maple syrup, biscuits and salmon could have been more expensive for British consumers as they would face taxes of up to 8% when entering the UK under the UK Global Tariff.

The deal secured today provides the foundation for both countries to negotiate a new trade deal, that will improve on the existing EU-Canada agreement. It will be tailored for the British economy with the potential to go further in new areas like digital trade, women's economic empowerment and the environment.

Today's announcement means that in under two years, the UK government has agreed trade deals with 53 countries accounting for £164bn of UK bilateral trade. It also takes us one step closer to accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), of which Canada is a member. CPTPP is a key part of our trade negotiations programme, helping businesses secure more opportunities in 11 key Pacific markets.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

This is a fantastic agreement for Britain which secures transatlantic trade with one of our closest allies. British businesses export everything from electric cars to sparkling wine to Canada, and today's deal will ensure that trade goes from strength to strength.

Our negotiators have been working flat out to secure trade deals for the UK, and from as early next year we have agreed to start work on a new, bespoke trade deal with Canada that will go even further in meeting the needs of our economy.

International Trade Secretary Liz Truss said:

Today's agreement underpins £20 billion worth of trade and locks in certainty for the thousands of jobs. We look forward to striking a new more ambitious deal next year with the aim of creating more opportunities for businesses and improving the lives of people across the country.

The UK is bonded by history, culture and transatlantic trade with our friends and allies in Canada, and we want to continue to build partnerships around the world that support our shared values of freedom and democracy, and today marks another step towards membership of a group of like-minded nations- the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

Today's agreement also guarantees tariff-free access to the Canadian market for British wine and spirits and ensures that the UK and Canada can continue to work towards recognising each other's qualifications in areas including accountancy, architecture and law.

All nations and regions will benefit from preferential access to Canadian markets. For example, together the West Midlands and North West regions exported over £1.2 billion worth of goods to Canada last year, while Scotland and Northern Ireland collectively exported £1 billion.

Josh Hardie, acting Director-General of the CBI said:

Agreeing a deal with Canada that secures continuity of trade is great news for businesses on both sides of the Atlantic.

Whether it's manufacturers still sending their products between the two countries tariff-free, or UK firms being able to sell their services into the Canadian market, this is a real milestone.

The signing of this deal can now lay the foundations for an even deeper trade agreement, tailored to both economies. Business stands ready to work with government to achieve that goal and to promote opportunities with Canada. Miles Beale, Chief Executive of the Wine and Spirit Trade Association, said:

This is a good result for the UK wine and spirit industry. Canada is an important market that is growing for UK exporters,

particularly our small and medium sized gin and English wine exporters.

This agreement doesn't just confirm the continued removal of tariffs, but gives us some extra footing and mechanisms to engage with the Canadians on their complex alcohol market, which is controlled at a provincial level. It should allow UK businesses to be more competitive in the Canadian Liquor Board system and that's a positive step in helping us to grow in the market.

British supercar maker McLaren Automotive, the largest part of luxury automotive, motorsport and technology company McLaren Group, sold its first car in Canada in 2012.

Now with retailers in major Canadian cities such as Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver the brand, represented by Pfaff Automotive, has seen a four-fold growth in sales over the past eight years.

Combining leading-edge technology that enhances owner experience and hand-built personalised luxury, McLaren is poised to sell its 1,000th supercar in Canada before the end of the year.

Tony Joseph, Regional Director for The Americas, McLaren Automotive said:

As an innovative British-based bespoke manufacturing business exporting to meet a growing demand for McLaren's supercars among Canadian buyers, today's news that the UK and Canada have secured a continuity trade agreement is welcomed. It provides added certainty and continuity both for us and our Canadian retail partners, customers and employees as we continue to build our presence in this key global market.

FSB National Chairman Mike Cherry said:

There was always a danger that the end of the transition period would mean losing wider international market access that we enjoyed as part of EU membership. So it's really encouraging to see new trade deals secured with trading partners like Canada, long since seen as a crucial market by small firms. The fact that this new agreement upholds the small business chapter that was previously in place is very welcome. We look forward to such chapters being at the centre of all future UK trade deals.

The UK-Canada Trade Continuity Agreement will be subject to final legal checks before it is formally signed.

Notes to Editors:

- The agreement will be formally signed once it has been subject to formal checks.
- Total trade between the UK and Canada was worth £19.9 billion in the four quarters to end of Q1 2020
- The UK will continue to be covered by the EU-Canada FTA during the transition period. This agreement will come into effect on 1 January 2021.
- Source of statistics on trade with Canada: ONS UK Economic Accounts, Q2 2020 release.
- Source of regional trade statistics: HMRC Regional Trade in Goods, Q2 2020 release.