

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.

[News story: New non-executive director and panel members appointed to the Competition and Markets Authority board](#)

Business Secretary Greg Clark has appointed Cynthia Dubin as a non-executive director and Paul Hughes, Robin Foster, Colleen Keck, Karthik Subramanya, Shrinivas Honap and Maria da Cunha as panel members to the [Competition and Markets Authority \(CMA\)](#).

The CMA is a non-ministerial department and the UK's primary competition and consumer authority. It has responsibility for carrying out investigations into mergers, markets and the regulated industries, and enforcing competition and consumer law.

Non-executive directors of the CMA Board play a key role in providing leadership and direction to the organisation, working with the chair and chief executive, responsible for setting the organisation's strategic direction, developing priorities and monitoring performance against its objectives. Members are appointed to the CMA Board for up to 5 years.

Panel members join independent groups to make decisions on 'phase 2' merger and market investigations and on regulatory appeals. Members are appointed to the CMA Panel for up to 8 years.

The new members appointed by the Secretary of State are:

Cynthia Dubin

Cynthia Dubin is Chair of the Audit and Finance Committee of Babcock & Wilcox Enterprises, Inc. and chief financial officer of Pivot Power LLP in the UK. Cynthia has previously held senior positions at Edison Mission Energy and JKX Oil & Gas plc. Her role as a board member commenced in January 2019.

Paul Hughes

Paul is a former partner of international law firm Herbert Smith Freehills, and has specialised in competition law and regulation for some 30 years. His appointment as a panel member commences in February 2019.

Robin Foster

Robin Foster is a non-executive member of the Content Board at media regulator Ofcom, and of the Advertising Advisory Committee at the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA). He was previously Strategy Partner at Ofcom and led the strategy and competition teams at the BBC. His appointment as a panel member commences in February 2019.

Colleen Keck

Colleen Keck is currently General Counsel and Company Secretary at Parkinson's UK and Deputy Chair of the Copyright Tribunal. Prior to that she was a partner at international law firm Allen & Overy LLP for over 20 years. Her appointment as a panel member commences in February 2019.

Karthik Subramanya

Karthik Subramanya is currently Senior Advisor with Boston Consulting Group. He is also a board member of Scottish Enterprise and Creative Scotland. His appointment as a panel member commences in February 2019.

Shrinivas Honap

Shrinivas Honap's roles include a non-executive directorship at the British Transport Police Authority, where he is Chair of the Pensions Committee. He has held senior roles in Capita Plc, Vodafone and Egg Financial Service. His appointment as a panel member commences in April 2019.

Maria da Cunha

Maria da Cunha is currently a non-executive director of De La Rue plc and a trustee of Community Integrated Care. She was previously General Counsel and Director of HR at British Airways plc. Her appointment as a panel member commences in February 2019.

[Press release: UKEF supports Cleveland](#)

Bridge contract to develop essential infrastructure in Sri Lanka

International Trade Secretary Liam Fox has today announced UK Export Finance (UKEF) will provide £49 million worth of support for Darlington-based firm Cleveland Bridge to construct 250 bridges for rural Sri Lankan communities.

This project has been designed to accelerate Sri Lanka's development through improvements in its rural transport infrastructure. Families and businesses will benefit directly from the project, reducing the distance people need to travel to reach essential services such as healthcare and education, as well as bringing rural communities closer together by cutting transport costs.

The financing of these 250 bridges follows the provision of support in 2011 for 210 bridges and in 2014 for 618 bridges. The Sri Lankan government estimates that collectively the bridges will benefit more than 100,000 families as well as businesses in the country.

The company has designed and built a number of iconic landmarks including the Sydney Harbour Bridge and Tyne Bridge. Cleveland Bridge designs its modular bridges in the UK and they are easily assembled to meet the specific needs of each project.

International Trade Secretary, Rt Hon. Dr Liam Fox MP, said:

Cleveland Bridge demonstrates the value British design and engineering can bring to the world stage. Over the course of the last 100 years UK Export Finance has led the way in delivering innovative finance to help British companies achieve international success across a wide range of industries and countries.

I am delighted that as UKEF marks its centenary year, it continues not only to support the UK's exporters but also those transformational projects that will have a direct impact on the lives of citizens across the globe.

Don Underwood, Commercial Consultant, Cleveland Bridge said:

We are delighted UKEF has chosen to support this project, and Cleveland Bridge's continued growth. UKEF's flexible support is hugely important for our international success, helping us build confidence with our overseas customers and access financing to deliver dynamic projects.

This announcement follows recent support from UKEF for projects to improve [Iraq's power provision](#) and [Bahrain's water supply](#).

[UK Export Finance](#) is the UK's export credit agency and a government department, working alongside the Department for International Trade as an integral part of its strategy and operations.

Our mission is to ensure that no viable UK export should fail for want of finance or insurance from the private market. We provide finance and insurance to help exporters win, fulfil and ensure they get paid for export contracts.

Sectors in which UKEF has supported exports include: aerospace, healthcare, infrastructure, telecommunications and transport.

UKEF has a [national regional network of 24 export finance managers](#) supporting export businesses.

Our range of products includes:

- Bond insurance policy
- Bond support scheme
- Buyer & supplier credit financing facility
- Direct lending facility
- Export insurance policy
- Export refinancing facility
- Export working capital scheme
- Letter of credit guarantee scheme

Our [country cover positions](#) outline our current cover policy and risk appetite for each country.

[News story: UK ranks 2nd place in the 7th annual US Global IP Index](#)



The UK provides one of the very best intellectual property (IP) environments

in the world. This is according to the latest US Chamber of Commerce Global Intellectual Property Index, published 7 February 2019.

The UK again ranks 2nd in the report, which compares 50 jurisdictions globally. The index considers factors that ensure businesses can obtain, exploit and enforce IP rights.

The UK is praised for its sophisticated IP environment and effective enforcement. This was highlighted by the work of its specialist crime unit and cross-industry and government cooperation.

The report recognises some challenges presented by the UK's withdrawal from the European Union (EU). However, it does note the supportive advice provided by the Intellectual Property Office (IPO) to business through its publications like [IP and BREXIT: The Facts](#).

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