

Press release: Environment Secretary proposes tougher labelling laws for allergy sufferers

Proposals to overhaul allergen labelling laws and give consumers clearer information on the food they buy have been unveiled by Environment Secretary Michael Gove.

Subject to a consultation launched today, food outlets selling pre-packaged food directly for sale could be required to follow new rules designed to give the UK's two million food allergy sufferers greater confidence in the safety of their food.

Under current rules, food prepared on the premise in which it is sold is not required to display allergen information on the package – but the proposed rules could go as far as seeing full ingredients labelling required by law.

The moves follow the tragic death of Natasha Ednan-Laperouse, the teenager who died after suffering an allergic reaction to a Pret a Manger baguette.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

Natasha's parents have suffered a terrible loss, and I want to pay tribute to Nadim and Tanya for their inspirational work to deliver Natasha's law.

We want to ensure that labels are clearer and that the rules for businesses are more consistent – so that allergy sufferers in this country can have confidence in the safety of their food.

Many businesses are already bringing changes on board independently, and in the meantime they should continue doing all they can to give consumers the information they need.

The proposed reforms cover labelling requirements for foods that are packed on the same premises from which they are sold – such as a packaged sandwich or salad made by staff earlier in the day and placed on a shelf for purchase.

Currently, these foods are not required to carry labels, and information on allergens can be given in person by the food business if asked by the consumer.

Food businesses and allergy sufferers are being invited to have their say on four options put forward to improve the way allergy information is provided for these foods, including:

- mandating full ingredient list labelling

- mandating allergen-only labelling on food packaging
- mandating 'ask the staff' labels on all products, with supporting information for consumers available in writing
- promoting best practice around communicating allergen information to consumers

Food Standards Agency Chairman Heather Hancock said:

It's essential for those of us with a food allergy or intolerance to know that we can trust the food we eat. Accurate and reliable labelling is vital, and this consultation is firmly aimed at improving the confidence we have in it.

In recent years choice, trust and availability has really improved for people with food allergy. We want those improvements to continue, so it's important that we hear from everyone affected, as part of this consultation. We're determined to keep on making life better for you.

CEO of [Allergy UK](#), Carla Jones, said:

We welcome this announcement and the commitment shown by the Environment Secretary on this issue. At Allergy UK we believe that whilst those living with allergies must be vigilant on their own behalf, the broader food industry needs to do more than just the bare minimum when it comes to catering for the allergic community. We encourage all those living with allergies to engage with this consultation to ensure their views on this important issue are heard.

The Environment Secretary and Food Minister David Rutley [met allergen groups](#) and retailers late last year to discuss the proposed options around allergen labelling laws.

The Environment Secretary has also met the parents of Natasha Ednan-Laperouse to discuss their campaign for a change in food labelling laws.

A number of food businesses have already begun to implement changes to their provision of allergen information and the [Food Standards Agency](#) will continue to provide food businesses with guidance on allergens. In September the FSA launched Easy to Ask, a campaign to empower young people to ask food businesses about allergens when eating out so they can make safe food choices.

The consultation can be responded to on Defra's [gov.uk page](#).

News story: Roads designed for future vehicles: apply for funding

Technological advances, including low carbon, connected and autonomous vehicles, will transform how people travel – and significantly change how the UK's transport network operates.

While our roads have been evolving, the biggest opportunities will come from planning ahead longer term to anticipate and respond to the requirements of future vehicles.

Working with Innovate UK, [Highways England](#) has up to £20 million for UK organisations with projects to change the way UK roads are designed, managed and used.

The competition is being run via the Small Business Research Initiative (SBRI).

Proving and testing an idea

There are 2 parallel competitions for:

- feasibility studies for ideas that are unproven and at a low [technology readiness level](#)
- feasibility projects that have already been proven and are at a mid to high technology readiness level

In both competitions, projects should tackle the transport challenges in Highways England's [Connecting the country: planning for the longer term](#) (pdf).

They must cover one of 6 core themes:

- design, construction and maintenance, including:
 - greater automation of the design process
 - greater automation of construction work, including the inspection and management of assets
 - adopting more modular construction techniques
 - expanding and improving data collection
 - creating a unified asset management system
 - increasing the use of advanced materials that are self-maintaining and extend the asset lifecycle
- connected and autonomous vehicles, such as maximising their safety and capability and increasing uptake
- customer mobility, such as improving experiences for road users and connections with other modes of transport
- energy and the environment, which covers electric and other clean energy sources as well as the impacts that road networks have on neighbouring environments

- operations, from customer service and traffic management, to roadworks and incident and severe weather response
- air quality, particularly targeting oxides of nitrogen and other air pollutants

A project can focus on different types of road or road use, and be either location-specific or generic, so long as it is applicable to Highways England's [strategic road network](#).

Proving the feasibility of an idea

There is £8 million for the feasibility studies competition. This is across 2 phases and will be split across the 6 themes.

The first phase has up to £2 million for up to 20 projects to evidence and determine the feasibility of an idea.

In phase 2, the most promising projects from the first phase can get funding to develop and evaluate a prototype. A total of £6 million will be available.

Competition information

- the competition opens on 11 February 2019, and the deadline for registrations is at midday on 1 May 2019
- organisations of any size are eligible to lead a project, working alone or collaborating with others
- in phase 1, projects can last up to 2 months with total costs of up to £75,000 including VAT. They can last up to 9 months and have costs of up to £1 million including VAT in phase 2
- there will be a webinar briefing on 14 February for applicants to find out more about the competition

Ready for further development

Up to £12 million is available for projects where the feasibility has already been proven and are at the development phase.

They should be ready for imminent on-road testing and deployment, having met necessary safety assurances.

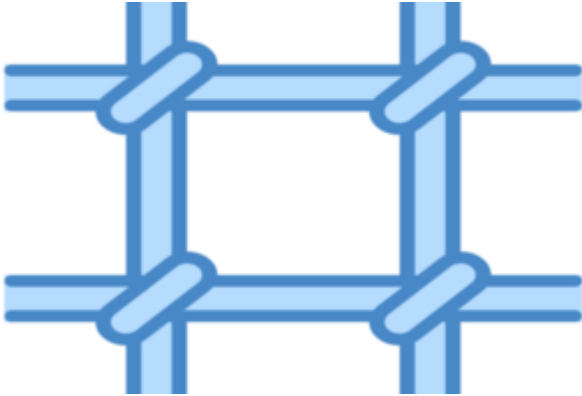
The expectation is to fund 12 projects across the 6 themes.

Competition information

- the competition opens on 11 February 2019, and the deadline for registrations is at midday on 1 May 2019
- organisations of any size are eligible to lead a project, working alone or collaborating with others
- projects are expected to start by September 2019 and last up to 12 months
- total eligible project costs can be up to £1 million including VAT
- there will be a webinar briefing on 14 February for applicants to find

out more about the competition

[News story: Call for evidence: 'Adults at Risk' in immigration detention](#)



In line with Stephen Shaw's recommendation, in his report '[Assessment of government progress in implementing the report on the welfare in detention of vulnerable persons](#)' (published in July 2018), I have been commissioned by the Home Secretary to report annually on the working of the Home Office's 'Adults at Risk' (AaR) policy.

My inspectors have begun work in preparation for the first annual report, which I aim to send to the Home Secretary in May 2019. This initial review will look at how effective and efficient the Home Office is in identifying vulnerability both at the point where an individual is being considered for detention and also during the time someone is held in detention. It will cover detainees held in Immigration Removal Centres (IRCs) and those held in prisons under immigration powers.

I am now inviting parties with relevant knowledge and expertise, including NGOs, academics, think tanks, faith groups and representative bodies, to write to me by 25 February 2019 with evidence about the working of AaR, with supporting case studies and statistical evidence where possible.

I am also happy to receive evidence from individuals, including those who have experienced immigration detention, however please note that my remit does not extend to investigating or making decisions about individual cases. This remains a Home Office responsibility.

As well as seeking evidence for this first annual AaR report, I am also interested in establishing a regular consultation process with key stakeholders, along similar lines to [ICIBI's existing forums](#). The main purpose of a new 'AaR Forum' would be to inform the scope of future AaR annual reports and any related inspections. It would be helpful if organisations interested in becoming a member of an AaR Forum could refer to this in their evidence submission. Like the existing forums, the aim would be

to meet 2-3 times a year, with the first meeting in May.

You can email your response to: chiefinspector@icibi.gov.uk

Or write to:

ICIBI,
5th Floor,
Globe House,
89 Eccleston Square,
London,
SW1V 1PN

Please note that submissions may be cited in the final report.

Published 25 January 2019

Last updated 6 February 2019 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 6 February 2019 Chief inspector extends deadline for the Adults at Risk call for evidence to 25 February 2019
2. 25 January 2019 First published.

[Press release: CMA orders sale of customer contracts in washroom suppliers' merger](#)

The decision by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) comes after an in-depth Phase 2 investigation into the completed merger between 2 of the UK's largest suppliers of washroom services. The firms supply commercial, industrial and public buildings with items and services such as soap dispensers, air sanitisers and sanitary waste disposal.

The CMA's group of independent panel members investigating the merger has today published its final decision. It found that the deal is likely to result in higher prices or a worse service for customers seeking a single supplier of waste disposal services at multiple locations across the whole or a large part of the UK.

The findings show that the merger of Rentokil and Cannon, who are 2 of the 3 major suppliers of washroom waste disposal, would reduce the choice of suppliers available to these customers. The CMA found that this effect would not be offset by competition from other suppliers. Nor did it find evidence that future entrants into the market would have sufficient impact in the foreseeable future.

To offset the loss of competition resulting from the merger, the CMA has

decided Rentokil / Cannon must sell all contracts with customers that have premises nationally and across multiple regions, who were serviced by Cannon prior to the merger. These contracts will be sold to a different company to recreate the pre-existing competitive intensity for future national contracts. This company would need to be approved by the CMA. The new washroom services supplier will also, should it so require, be able to acquire Cannon infrastructure such as vehicles and equipment to enable it to provide an effective service to these customers.

Anne Lambert, Inquiry Chair, said:

Our decision will preserve competition and choice for customers seeking a single supplier of washroom services across multiple locations.

Where the CMA concludes that a merger will have a significant impact on competition, it will take action to restore that competition – regardless of whether a merger has been completed.

Full information on the merger investigation can be found on the [case page](#).

Notes to editors

1. The CMA is the UK's primary competition and consumer authority. It is an independent non-ministerial government department with responsibility for carrying out investigations into mergers, markets and the regulated industries and enforcing competition and consumer law.
2. Rentokil Initial acquired Cannon Hygiene in January 2018. In April 2018, the CMA called in the merger for investigation. At the end of the initial (phase 1) review, Rentokil Initial offered no undertakings to address the competition concerns found in the CMA's phase 1 decision, and the CMA therefore referred the case for an in-depth ([phase 2](#)) investigation on 28 June 2018.
3. On 18 October 2018 the CMA [published its provisional findings](#) and [notice of possible remedies](#) and invited views.
4. The CMA's functions in phase 2 merger investigations are performed by inquiry groups chosen from the CMA's panel members. The appointed inquiry group is the decision-maker on phase 2 investigations.
5. The CMA's panel members come from a variety of backgrounds, including economics, law, accountancy and/or business; the membership of an inquiry group usually reflects a mix of expertise and experience.

6. The members of this inquiry group are [Anne Lambert \(Inquiry Chair\)](#), [Gareth Davies](#), [Susan Hankey](#) and [Jeremy Newman](#).
 7. Media enquiries to the CMA should be directed to press@cma.gov.uk or 020 3738 6460.
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[News story: Tech merger may reduce options for people with communication needs](#)

Tobii and Smartbox design and supply technology to enable people with complex speech and language needs to communicate – known as augmentative and assistive communication solutions. These solutions include specialised hardware and software, such as alarm systems, speech generating devices and hearing technologies.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has found that Tobii and Smartbox are leading suppliers in this sector and are each other's main competitor. The CMA is concerned that the merged company would face little competition, which could lead to a reduced range of products being offered, higher prices and fewer new products being developed.

Mike Walker, Chief Economic Advisor, said:

These are vital technologies bought on behalf of vulnerable people by the NHS, charities and schools.

We believe that the merger could stifle innovation and lead to less choice. We will launch a further in-depth investigation if the companies fail to address our concerns.

Protecting vulnerable consumers is at the heart of the CMA's [Annual Plan](#), as reflected by its other recent work in areas such as [funerals](#), [care homes](#) and [online gambling](#).

Tobii and Smartbox now have until 1 February 2019 to offer solutions to resolve the CMA's concerns, otherwise the merger will be referred for a Phase 2 investigation.

More information can be found on the [Tobii / Smartbox case page](#).