

Skills Bill becomes law

New laws have been passed today (28 April) through the Skills and Post-16 Education Act that will help transform the skills and training landscape and level up opportunities across the country.

Skills to support the growing green economy will be prioritised to create a workforce for jobs now and in the future, and schools will be required to make sure all children get to meet people that provide technical education routes such as apprenticeships, T Levels or traineeships – opening their eyes to a wide range of careers.

The legislation will help economic recovery and growth by making it easier for people to get the skills they need to secure well-paid jobs in industries with skills gaps, such as health and social care, engineering, digital, clean energy and manufacturing. It will also give more people the opportunity to get jobs in their local areas, by requiring employers and colleges to work together to identify the skills needed within communities.

The unethical practice of essay mills will also be criminalised to tackle companies that actively facilitate cheating and dishonest behaviour by providing students with essays for money.

The Act underpins the government's transformation of post-16 education and skills as set out in the [Skills for Jobs White Paper](#) and will help level up and drive growth across the whole country.

Minister for Skills Alex Burghart said:

The Skills and Post-16 Education Act will transform the skills, training and post-16 education landscape and level up opportunities across the country.

This legislation will make sure everyone can gain the skills they need to progress into a rewarding job, and businesses have access to a pipeline of talented, qualified employees for their workforces – boosting productivity.

Key measures introduced by the Act include:

- embedding employers in the heart of the skills system by placing a legal requirement on colleges and other providers to work with employers to develop skills plans, so that the training on offer meets the needs of local areas, and people no longer have to leave their hometowns to find great jobs;
- making sure all pupils meet providers of technical education so that they understand the wide range of career routes and training available to them, such as apprenticeships, T Levels or traineeships, not just the traditional academic options;

- prioritising green skills so the training on offer across the country meets the needs of the growing green economy and helps gets more people into jobs;
- supporting the transformation of the current student loans system so from 2025 learners can access a flexible loan for higher-level education and training at university or college, useable at any point in their lives;
- introducing new powers to intervene when colleges are failing to deliver good outcomes for the communities they serve;
- making it a criminal offence to provide, arrange or advertise essay mill services for financial gain to students taking a post-16 qualification at institutions in England including colleges, universities and sixth forms; and
- creating a unified skills system that builds from quality gains achieved with apprenticeships and T Levels by ensuring all technical qualifications match up to employers' high standards.

[Employers in eight trailblazer areas](#) across the country have already been working with local training providers to create skills plans that align to what local communities need. These plans are now being rolled out across the country, opening up more opportunities for people to gain the skills they and businesses need to succeed.

The new measures build on the work already under way to boost skills and get more people into better jobs, including working with employers to create more apprenticeship opportunities, establishing a network of Institutes of Technology and rolling out new T Levels.

Jennifer Coupland, chief executive of the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE), which leads with implementing the government's employer-led technical education reforms, said:

Following passage of this landmark legislation, we can look forward to creating a unified skills system which is simpler to understand and employers and learners can really trust.

IfATE has empowered employers to drive up the quality of apprenticeships and roll out exciting new T Levels. The time is now right to extend the employer-led reforms across technical education.

[Animal health and welfare bills](#)

receive Royal Assent

Protections for animals were boosted today as pieces of legislation banning the use of cruel glue traps and introducing fines for people who fail to provide the proper levels of care to their pets, zoo animals and livestock became law.

The Glue Traps (Offences) Act, introduced by Jane Stevenson MP, bans the use of inhumane glue traps which are a widely available method of rodent control but can cause immense suffering. Animals can remain alive for 24 hours or more, eventually dying of stress, exhaustion, dehydration or self-inflicted injuries. Wildlife and domestic pets can also get stuck to the traps.

Under the Animals (Penalty Notices) Act, introduced by Andrew Rosindell, people who fail to properly care for their pets, zoo animals and livestock could face fines of up to £5,000. The measures in the Act will help drive up animal welfare standards closing the gap between warnings and criminal prosecution, and acting as an important deterrent alongside the current five-year maximum prison sentence for animal welfare offences, which was increased through the Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Act passed last year. Under this new legislation, fines could be handed out by enforcement authorities to pet breeders who fail to microchip puppies before being rehomed, horse owners tethering their animal in a way that neglects their basic needs or a farmer transporting livestock that are not fit for travel.

In addition, the Government's Animal Welfare (Sentience) Bill has today also gained Royal Assent. This will create a new Animal Sentience Committee made up of experts from within the field. This committee will hold government to account on how well their decisions have taken account of the welfare of sentient animals, publishing reports that Ministers need to respond to in Parliament.

These acts build on the action we have already taken to boost the UK's reputation as a global leader on animal rights. Now that we have left the EU, the UK has new freedoms to further strengthen animal health and welfare standards.

Animal welfare minister Lord Zac Goldsmith said:

We are a nation of animal lovers and the passing of today's legislation is a significant moment for the health and welfare of the country's animals.

The UK, since leaving the EU, has been able to further strengthen its position as a global leader on animal rights. The penalty notice measures being introduced today will act as a powerful deterrent, building on measures we have already taken such as increasing prison sentences for cruelty offences. We will also be protecting wildlife and domestic pets from falling victim to

inhumane glue traps, and we have delivered on our manifesto commitment to put animal sentience provisions into law.

The Glue Traps (Offences) Act, which was introduced to Parliament by Jane Stevenson MP, will ensure licences to use glue traps are only issued to professional pest controllers on an exceptional basis, to preserve public health or safety where there is no suitable alternative. Licence holders would then need to follow conditions set out in the licence to ensure the welfare of any rodents is upheld, such as regular monitoring of set traps. This means those found to have used a trap without a licence could face up to six months in prison and/or an unlimited fine. The ban will come into force in the next two years.

Welcoming the Royal Assent of the Glue Traps (Offences) Bill, Jane Stevenson, MP for Wolverhampton North East, said:

I am absolutely thrilled that my Glue Traps Bill has been granted Royal Assent, meaning it has now become law. The banning of the use of glue traps by the general public is another step forward in the strengthening of animal welfare legislation in England, and I want to thank everyone involved in making this happen.

The use of glue traps is cruel and barbaric, and has often led to animals not intended to be caught in these traps dying in the most inhumane way. Together with ministers at Defra and agencies such as the RSPCA, HSI and others, I am pleased to have made a positive difference.

Welcoming the Royal Assent of the Animals (Penalty Notices) Bill, Andrew Rosindell, MP for Romford, said:

Today, my Animals (Penalty Notices) Bill became law after receiving royal assent from Her Majesty The Queen. Individuals who commit offences against animals will now face fines of up to £5,000. This Act of Parliament will enable fines to be introduced to ensure that offenders face tougher penalties for crimes in addition to the existing maximum 5-year prison sentence for the most serious offences.

This is an absolutely right step forward to ensure that our legislation protecting animals is the strongest anywhere in the world. It has been an honour to work with animal welfare charities including the RSPCA and the Battersea Dogs and Cats Home, in ensuring the Bill strikes the right balance in closing the gap between the worst offences, and those which receive no punishment. I look forward to working with colleagues and the Government to further strengthen our protections for animals.

Claire Bass, executive director of Humane Society International/UK, said:

We warmly welcome both the Sentience Act, as a critical foundation for future animal welfare policy improvements, and the ban on crude and inhumane rodent glue traps, which will prevent an enormous amount of suffering for some of our smallest, most vulnerable creatures. Animal welfare matters hugely to the British public, and it is absolutely right and proper that that sentiment is reflected in British laws.

RSPCA Director of Advocacy and Policy Emma Slawinski said:

It's a good week for animal welfare; the RSPCA has been campaigning on these issues for a long time. Glue traps inflict awful injuries on wildlife, pets and other animals; it's high time they were banned. Recognising that animals experience feelings and emotions is vital to help protect them and Fixed Penalty Notices will help to bridge the gap between advice and prosecution.

Battersea Dogs and Cats Home's Head of Policy & Public Affairs, Michael Webb, said:

As a leading animal welfare organisation, we welcome the steps made today to further protect all animals. We hope that the new Penalty Notices Act will be an effective tool in clamping down on minor offences, including breaching microchipping regulations, alongside the continued use of the Animal Welfare Act to punish those who commit an offence that harms animals. We look forward to working with Defra to establish in greater detail which offences will be subject to the use of Fixed Penalty Notices, to ensure the Act is as effective as possible.

These three acts will help build on the Government's commitment to provide leadership on animal welfare and revolutionise the treatment of animals in the UK and introduce measures to protect the health and welfare of animals at home and abroad, as set out in the [Action Plan for Animal Welfare](#).

[Keynote Speech by John Glen MP,](#)

Economic Secretary to the Treasury, at a German Economic Council event in Berlin

Introduction

Guten Abend, meine Damen und Herren! Lassen Sie mich zunächst sagen, wie sehr es mich freut, wieder einmal hier bei Ihnen zu sein, in einer der großartigsten Städte der Welt.

Good evening, everyone – and let me begin by saying what a pleasure it is to be with you all here this evening... back in one of the world's great cities.

When the Wirtschaftsrat invited me here today, I didn't hesitate to accept the invitation – for a very important reason.

In difficult times ... when our most important values – freedom, peace, democracy, the rule of law – are challenged ... it's only natural that we all turn to our friends and partners who share those values...

Values which are central to our existence – and our success – as liberal, market, prosperous societies.

Putin's assault on Ukraine... unprovoked and premeditated... has been an attack against a sovereign, democratic, European state.

The United Kingdom stands with Ukraine... and will always defend the Ukrainian people's right to choose their own destiny.

We do so... proudly... alongside likeminded friends such as Germany...

And let me say that the UK greatly welcomes Germany's "Zeitenwende" ... your 100 billion euro special defence fund, and commitment to spend 2% of GDP on defence in support of our shared security.

We will continue to work closely with Germany in this new era of European history, just as we have done over the past months.. when together, with our international allies, we introduced the largest and most severe economic sanctions that Russia has ever faced...

Measures that will help to cripple Putin's war machine for years to come.

Sanctions

Finance, of course, is one of the most powerful components of our collective response – and an area where the UK is determined to act forcefully as part of the united effort.

Since Russia's invasion, we've sanctioned more than 1200 individuals,

entities, and subsidiaries.

Over 3 million Russian companies, including Gazprom, have been barred from raising money on UK capital markets.

And we are doubling the size of our Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation to help ensure these additional measures are properly understood, implemented and enforced.

But clearly we can only succeed if both government and industry collaborate, to ensure these measures are effective. So, we are working closely with colleagues throughout the private sector to help overcome any challenges they may face at this time.

There can be no doubt that a coordinated, international approach will maximise the impact of sanctions.

It is vital that the international community throws its full weight behind these unprecedented measures and implements them robustly.

We in the UK, therefore, have greatly valued, the cooperation of our international partners, in particular Germany and the EU, in coordinating our economic response to the invasion of Ukraine.

I have no doubt that it's thanks to those united efforts, that we have together been able to sanction many of the individuals and organisations providing political and financial support to Russia's aggression in Ukraine.

By collectively targeting elites and oligarchs, cutting off transport and finance links and starving Moscow of technology and know-how... we will make sure Putin pays the price while simultaneously degrading Russia's ability to perpetuate this course of action.

To sum up, our sanctions are already biting... and they will bite harder.

But financial services are not just a potent force against Putin's war machine...

Over the past weeks they've proven themselves to be a symbol of western values...values that must be defended and promoted.

I think there's an important lesson for us here and one that we should continue to remember

Because inevitably, at some point, some nations will push back against the process of global integration that has been driven by the West. Something that could put our capital markets at risk of fragmentation.

That is why I argue that from both a security and economic perspective, it is in the interests of the UK and German, Europe and in fact all democracies to continue to build a financial system that is well-regulated and secure.

Something that we can achieve through forging an alliance of countries that

share our values... countries like Japan, Australia, South Korea and Canada.

In short, we should strive as far as possible for cohesion and actively avoid a situation where the financial systems of like-minded countries splinter and fragment.

There's a practical, as well as a strategic dimension to all this of course.

Because as our continent emerges from COVID-19 and begins the task of helping to rebuild Ukraine... we need more than ever the deep capital markets that will help keep the costs of funding European business low.

The case for cooperation – Financial Services

Of course, the cohesive response across Europe to Russian aggression not only underlines the need for long-term cooperation.

It also reminds us of how much we share as a global community, and that sometimes we can be a bit too focused on the smaller differences that divide us rather than our shared values and aspirations.

But I know that many of you will be wondering how I can rationalise a call for cooperation with the UK's departure from the European Union.

In this City, which has seen so much... where there are constant reminders of the divisions and unifications of the past... I can see how it would be hard to understand the British people's decision.

Nonetheless, that is what it was – the democratic, if not somewhat agonised decision of the British public.

And one of the messages that I want to send, while I'm here, is that if we now fail to cooperate in ways that benefit both the UK and Germany, it won't just be a missed opportunity... but a failure of statesmanship.

For me, as the UK minister responsible for financial services, that is a powerful notion.

Financial services have been part of both our countries' economic DNA for centuries.

Over the years, our cities... our citizens... have pioneered banking and the buying and selling of stocks and bonds. They've made and then remade the fabric of global commerce.

And the skyscrapers of London and Frankfurt are a testament to that fact.

Very often the people in those skyscrapers are communicating and trading with each other... with hundreds of millions of pounds and euros' worth of financial services passing in both directions each year... on top of the tens of billions of more conventional trade between our two countries.

British consumers, too, understand and appreciate German manufacturing.

In fact, the UK imported an enormous £53.8bn of goods over 2021.

It's no surprise that German vehicles made up the largest proportion of these imports.

But the UK imports an array of other goods and services including medical, electrical goods and non-ferrous metals.

Of course, every nation – and every manufacturing sector – needs capital to grow, and I'm proud of the contribution Britain makes to Germany in that regard.

But I think we can do more.

In fact, I believe the UK – and the City of London – are perfectly equipped to help to drive growth... not just in Berlin or Frankfurt, but in Dusseldorf, Hamburg, Cologne.

Because of available capital, yes... but also because we have the largest and most developed market in Europe for related professional services such as accounting, management consulting and legal services.

We can make it cheaper and easier for German firms to raise capital.

Last year alone, £16.8bn was raised through 120 IPOs in London.

But the Chancellor and I want to build on this base to make our capital markets even more attractive.

That's why we recently carried out a major review of our listing regime.

And, it's why, following that review, we have made commitments on all its recommendations... so we can optimise the capital raising process for large and small firms on our markets.

While there's, of course, a clear economic benefit to the UK, here, we think our deep capital markets have the capacity to support the growth and long-term success of our European friends and neighbours, including Germany.

I'd like to turn now to another area of great focus for the UK. That is green finance.

Green Finance

I'm certain we can all agree that the Financial Services industry has a crucial role to play in our response to environmental challenges like climate change.

Fortunately, many jurisdictions are now acting on sustainable finance and we at the Treasury are pleased to count Germany as a key ally in this space.

Under the UK's G7 presidency last year, finance ministers reached a landmark agreement on sustainability disclosures.

I know Germany has eagerly taken up the sustainable finance baton for its own G7 presidency this year, which is most welcome.

And the G20, with its Sustainable Finance Working Group, is also taking forward important work in this space.

But though multi-jurisdictional action is welcome, it also brings certain risks.

Unnecessary divergence in jurisdictions' disclosure rules limits comparability, hampering useability for investors and increasing compliance costs for firms.

That's why it's so crucial that jurisdictional standards be based on and align with international best practice.

So far that's come in the form of the Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosures' recommendations... but the IFRS Foundation's International Sustainability Standards Board, is taking those high-level principles and making them fit for a regulatory standard.

By rapidly developing an international baseline reporting standard under strong governance, the ISSB will deliver truly consistent and comparable sustainability reporting globally.

In turn, this will enable international investors to identify, assess and correctly price in sustainability risks, then direct capital accordingly.

Countries are rapidly getting behind the ISSB as the de facto sustainability reporting body, with 41 countries welcoming its formal launch at COP26 Finance Day.

Digital Finance

Frankfurt, as the home of the ISSB, may be fast earning a reputation as a hub for green finance

But Berlin, is increasingly a centre for all things digital

Given this city's long history of invention, enterprise and creativity – it's little wonder that, dozens of fintech firms have sprung up here in the space of just a few years.

In fact six out of Germany's seven fintech unicorns hail from this city.

But as in the UK, the success of your digital finance industry is not restricted to one city.

Nor are its benefits limited domestically.

An excellent illustration of the sector's increasingly international footprint, is Stuttgart-based GFT Technologies' plans to create a fintech-focused innovation hub in Manchester, which will create over 200 jobs.

This is clearly a win-win for both our nations...

And I've every confidence that the hub will be a fantastic addition to the UK's busy digital finance space – which is also experiencing exponential growth in industries ranging from fintech to digital assets.

While the UK fintech sector is in a great place, we're not complacent.

As a government, we see it as our job, to help the industry do its job of ensuring that success continues.

And we're wholeheartedly focused on making that happen.

A key part of this mission involves striking the right balance on highly innovative, fast-moving sectors like digital assets. For example, we want the UK to be a global hub for cryptoassets... and a top global location for starting and scaling crypto-companies.

We have a detailed plan... we are determined to learn quickly. We want to take a leading role in harnessing the potential of blockchain and supporting the development of a world-best crypto ecosystem.

As you've probably gathered, we're hugely ambitious about this area.

Equally, though, we're very conscious of the need to take the right, responsible approach to regulation for the benefit of firms, consumers, markets and financial stability.

While the UK government sets the overall framework, we believe in leaving our expert regulators to set firm facing rules and supervise their application.

This approach allows us to move nimbly while, simultaneously maintaining high standards..

A good example of this is our regulatory approach to stablecoins, that we recently set out.

These proposed legislative changes will create the right conditions for stablecoin issuers and service providers to operate and grow in the UK. While consumers will be able to use stablecoins with confidence because they have been bought into the regulatory framework.

More broadly, we are using crypto-technologies to make government more efficient... developing opportunities to use distributed ledger technology for Customs and International Trade to ease the import of goods. And, of course, we will continue to support further opportunities to deploy this technology.

Conclusion

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I realise that I've given you something of whistle-stop tour of all that's happening in the UK financial services space right now.

But if I can leave you with one message it is this:

There is clear value to our markets being open and interconnected and I, as City Minister, am committed to maximising the opportunities... for both our countries.

Open and global markets achieve the best outcomes for consumers and businesses alike... by increasing access to expertise, talent and choice of products.

And our dynamic commercial relationship is proof of that fundamental truth.

We should be proud about what we're already doing together... but excited, too, about the future... because the best is still to come.

Thank you very much.

Boost for public safety as four justice bills receive Royal Assent

- More powers to police and tougher sentences for worst offenders
- Minimum age of marriage in England and Wales raised to 18 to keep children safe
- New courts measures to reduce delays for victims

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts (PCSC) Act equips the police with the powers and tools they need to combat crime and create safer communities, while overhauling sentencing laws to keep serious sexual and violent offenders behind bars for longer.

New court orders will crack down on knife crime, making it easier to stop and search known knife offenders and prevent future tragedies. Alongside this a new legal duty will be placed on different parts of the public sector to work together to tackle serious violence.

The act will also give greater protection to the vulnerable – domestic abuse victims will be given more time to report incidents of common assault or battery and higher maximum penalties will be introduced for child cruelty offences. Judges will now be able to hand down life sentences to dangerous drivers who kill on our roads and the act also halts the automatic early release of offenders deemed to be a danger to the public.

Meanwhile, the Judicial Review and Courts Act delivers on a manifesto commitment to ensure courts are not open to abuse and delay and provides much needed flexibility on the outcome of Judicial Reviews (JR). Crucially, it also ends inefficient so-called 'Cart' JRs to minimise delays in immigration,

asylum and other cases that have already been refused permission to appeal by judges.

Two important government-backed Private Members' Bills were also added onto the statute book today. Under the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Act the legal age of marriage will be raised to 18 in England and Wales to protect children from the scourge of forced marriage.

The Approved Premises (Substance Testing) Act strengthens the Probation Service's ability to tackle drug abuse among offenders through new compulsory testing to reduce reoffending.

Deputy Prime Minister, Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice Dominic Raab said:

This government has been clear in its commitment to cut crime and protect the public – and today we are delivering on that promise.

These new laws give the police and courts the tools they need to keep people safe – particularly women and children – and will restore confidence in the criminal justice system by making sure punishments fit the severity of the crime.

The laws passed today build on the government's Beating Crime Plan to reduce crime, better protect victims and make the country safer. It has already seen the recruitment of more than 13,500 of the 20,000 extra police officers promised by March 2023 – one of the Prime Minister's first commitments in office.

The PCSC Act also doubles the maximum penalty from 12 months to 2 years for those who assault police or other emergency workers, such as prison officers, fire service personnel or frontline health workers – helping to protect those who put their lives on the line to keep communities safe. It will also bring 'Harpers Law' onto the statute book, introducing mandatory life sentences for anyone convicted of killing an emergency worker whilst committing a crime.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

Today is a landmark moment for the people of our country. The measures we promised to introduce to cut crime and make our streets safer are now law.

Passing the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act is integral to our Beating Crime Plan and delivers on our commitments to back the police, level up the entire country and give everyone the security of a safe street and home.

This act will support the 20,000 additional police recruits that will be in place this time next year to reduce serious violence, including knife crime and domestic abuse, and make sure the very

worst criminals are thrown behind bars for the longest possible time.

Today's announcement comes as the government is investing £477m to deliver speedier justice for victims and reduce the backlog of cases which rose significantly during the pandemic. This includes lifting the cap on Crown Court sitting days for another year to ensure courts can continue working at full capacity to minimise delays.

The Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Act was sponsored as a Private Members' Bill by Pauline Latham MP. It will also make it an offence to arrange a child marriage under any circumstances with perpetrators facing up to 7 years behind bars.

The Approved Premises (Substance Testing) Act was brought forward by Rob Butler MP and toughens drug testing within accommodation used by the probation service to house recently released high-risk offenders on licence. The move will help probation staff better identify those at risk, keep them on the path to rehabilitation and cut crime.

Notes to editors:

Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act key measures:

- Mandatory life sentences for those who kill an emergency worker in the course of their duty, known as Harper's Law.
- Increasing the maximum penalties for child cruelty offences, including up to life imprisonment for those who cause or allow the death of a child or vulnerable adult in their household, known as Tony's Law.
- Creation of new offences of breastfeeding voyeurism punishable with up to 2 years in custody.
- Extending the prosecution time limit for domestic abuse-related common assault and battery charges from 6 months of the offence to 6 months of it being formally reported to the police, up to a maximum of 2 years.
- Whole life orders for the premeditated murder of a child as well as allowing judges to hand out this maximum punishment to 18-20-year-olds in exceptional cases to reflect the gravity of a crime. For example, acts of terrorism which lead to mass loss of life.
- New powers to halt the automatic early release of offenders who pose a danger to the public.
- For children who commit murder, introducing new starting points for deciding the minimum amount of time in custody based on age and seriousness of offence, and reducing the opportunities for over 18s who committed murder as a child to have their minimum term reviewed.
- Ending the halfway release of offenders sentenced to between 4 and 7 years in prison for serious violent and sexual offences such as rape, manslaughter and GBH with intent. Instead, they will have to spend two-thirds of their time behind bars.
- Ensuring the courts pass at least the minimum sentence for certain offences, including repeat knife possession and third strike burglary, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

- Reforming criminal records disclosure to reduce the time period people have to declare previous non-violent, sexual or terrorist convictions to employers – covering both adult and youth offences.
- Increasing the maximum penalty to life for killer drivers.
- Tougher community sentences which double the amount of time offenders can be subject to curfew restrictions to 2 years.
- Extended ‘positions of trusts’ laws to protect teenagers from abuse by making it illegal for sports coaches and religious leaders to engage in sexual activity with 16 and 17-year-olds.
- New rules to end the need for participants to travel unnecessarily to court by allowing criminal courts to maximise the use of video and audio technology as it develops.
- Enshrining open justice principles by allowing for remote observers – using video and audio technology – across the vast majority of our courts and tribunals improving public access and transparency.
- For the first time enabling profoundly deaf people to sit on juries. Current laws ban the presence of a ‘stranger’ being in the jury deliberation room – this will be scrapped and instead allow a British Sign Language interpreter into the room.
- Increasing the maximum penalty for criminal damage of a memorial from 3 months to 10 years.
- Stronger youth community sentencing options, including greater use of location monitoring and longer daily curfews, providing robust alternatives to custody.
- Doubling the maximum penalty for assaulting an emergency worker from 12 months to 2 years.
- A legal duty on local authorities, the police, criminal justice agencies, health and fire and rescue services to work together to reduce serious violence.

New protections and powers for the police include:

- Serious Violence Reduction Orders – new stop and search powers against convicted knife offensive weapons offenders designed to ensure offenders are steered away from crime and if they persist in carrying a knife or an offensive weapon, that they are more likely to be caught and put in prison.
- Homicide reviews following deaths of adults involving offensive weapons to better understand the drivers of violent crime and stop it happening in the first place.
- Enshrining the police covenant in law.
- A new law to allow police to obtain a search warrant for evidence related to the location of human remains where it is not possible to bring about a prosecution, for example where a suspect is dead, unfit to plead, or has already been convicted of the offence in the absence of a body.
- Strengthen police powers to tackle non-violent protests that have a significant disruptive effect on the public or on access to Parliament.
- Reform pre-charge bail to better protect vulnerable victims and witnesses. Known as Kay’s Law, this will put victims of crime at the heart of police decision making and support the timely progression of

investigations.

- Strengthen police powers to tackle unauthorised encampments that significantly interfere with a person's or community's ability to make use of the land.

Judicial Review and Courts Act:

- Will protect certain decisions of the Upper Tribunal from Judicial Review, subject to exceptions, thereby removing Cart Judicial Reviews.
- Government analysis shows that typically only 3.4% of Cart judicial review claims succeed, compared to between a 30 percent and 50 percent success rate in other types of judicial review.
- With the 'Cart' route scrapped, 150 judge days of High Court time will be freed up as well as 30 judge days in the Upper Tribunal, estimated to save nearly half a million pounds which can be better used to tackle the backlog. It will introduce the power to make two modifications to remedies, to be available at judges' discretion:
 - Suspended quashing orders mean that a judge can set a time limit for government to act on the orders of the court. For example, a department might have a month to consult on the best way to resolve an administrative error, rather than rush to do it immediately.
 - Prospective quashing orders (instead of retrospective) mean judges can determine the government's decision unlawful but without invalidating any prior actions based on that decision. For example, if a judgment found a copyright regulation unlawful, it could uphold the validity of past transactions (for example the copying of music for private use) taken in good faith based on that regulation.

Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Act:

- Raises the legal age of marriage in England and Wales to 18, from the current 16 with parental or judicial consent.
- Creates a new offence of arranging a child marriage without the use of coercion. It is already illegal to arrange a child marriage with the use or threat of violence or other abuse.

Approved Premise (Substance Testing) Act:

- Creates a statutory framework to test high-risk offenders on probation for drugs while they are resident in Approved Premises. This widens the number and type of drugs that are tested for – helping to reduce the number of drug-related deaths and keep those within and living around Approved Premises safe.
 - It ensures that staff can react quickly to misuse and implement the necessary treatment. This would replicate the regime in prisons and ensure continuity of support between prison and Approved Premises.
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Greater protections for voters as government's Elections Bill achieves Royal Assent

Voters across the UK will benefit from greater protection against election fraud, more support for disabled people at the polling booth, and measures to prevent intimidation at the ballot box, as the Elections Bill receives Royal Assent today (28 April 2022).

The Elections Act also includes new anti-fraud measures for absent voters, the introduction of First Past the Post for mayoral and Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) elections and a new electoral sanction for those convicted of intimidation against a candidate, campaigner or elected office holder.

The legislation will require authorities to provide disabled voters with specialist equipment to support them to vote if needed, and allow anyone over the age of 18 to accompany them in the polling station.

The Act delivers on manifesto commitments to protect the integrity of democracy in the UK by introducing a requirement to show photographic identification when voting in person at polling stations. This greater level of protection, which already exists in Northern Ireland, will ensure the electoral system remains secure, transparent and fair for generations to come.

New measures will also expand participation in our democracy by removing the 15-year limit on British citizens overseas voting in UK Parliamentary elections.

Minister for Equalities and Levelling Up Communities Kemi Badenoch MP:

It is paramount we protect the integrity of our ballot, so our elections remain secure for generations to come.

Royal Assent now means we can eliminate election fraud and make elections more inclusive, ensuring that everyone who is eligible to vote will continue to have the opportunity to do so.

The Act will:

- Deliver on the government's commitment to stop postal vote harvesting by changing the rules so that people can apply for a postal or proxy vote online through a new online system for absent voters. Applicants can use the online platform as part of the register to vote process or, for those who are already registered, as a stand-alone online submission. These measures will introduce safeguards against the abuse of postal voting.

- Introduce photographic identification for voting in polling stations in Great Britain.
- Changes the voting system for mayoral and PCC elections to First Past the Post, meaning that the candidate who wins the most votes in each constituency is elected.
- Require authorities to provide voters with disabilities with specialist equipment to support them to vote if need, and allow anyone over the age of 18 to accompany disabled voters in the polling station.
- Removes the 15-year limit on British citizens overseas voting in UK Parliamentary elections, allowing any British citizen previously registered or resident in the UK to register to vote.
- Introduce a new electoral sanction for those convicted of intimidation against a candidate, campaigner or elected office holder. The sanction would ban offenders from standing for election for 5 years, as well as the punishment for the underlying criminal offence which can include a fine or imprisonment, depending on the severity of the intimidation.
- Update undue influence to include a wide range of harms, such as physical violence, damage to a person's property or reputation, undue spiritual pressure and injury, or inflicting financial loss.
- Update the political finance regulatory framework, by increasing transparency, fairness, and strengthening controls against ineligible foreign spending on electoral campaigning.
- Introduce a new digital imprints regime that will go much further than the print imprint regime, increasing transparency and empowering voters to make informed decisions about the material they see online.

Following today's Royal Assent, it is the government's ambition that implementation of the Act will happen within the lifetime of this Parliament. Local councils will receive support from the government's Electoral Integrity Programme to allow them to deliver the changes, and the Electoral Commission will communicate through campaigns with voters to inform them of the new requirements. The government will meet the cost of the new requirements which arise from the Act.

The new voter identification requirement will be rolled out through secondary legislation and will apply to UK Parliamentary elections across Great Britain, mayoral and council elections and local referendums in England, and Police and Crime Commissioner elections in England and Wales in addition to existing provisions for all Northern Ireland elections.

Government research shows 98% of electors already have an accepted form of identification, and those who do not can apply for a free Voter Card from their local council.