

# CMA welcomes Sony and Nintendo's gaming subscription improvements

Press release

The CMA welcomes improvements made by Sony and Nintendo to their gaming subscription practices and has now closed its investigation into the online gaming sector.



The Competition and Markets Authority's (CMA) sector-wide investigation looked at subscriptions for online gaming services where people automatically continue to be charged indefinitely until they take action to end their contract. The CMA was particularly concerned that people might find themselves locked into paying for services they no longer want or use.

The CMA has secured an undertaking from Sony relating to its PlayStation Plus product, a service which allows users to play online together. In particular, Sony has agreed to put in place measures to protect customers who haven't used their memberships for a long time but are still paying. Sony will contact these customers to remind them how to stop payments and, if they continue not to use their memberships, Sony will ultimately stop taking further payments.

The CMA also engaged with Nintendo, which changed its business practices during the course of the investigation so that Nintendo Switch Online Service is no longer sold with automatic renewal set as the default option. This means people will not be automatically entering into renewing contracts, addressing a number of the CMA's concerns about people becoming locked in.

Michael Grenfell, Executive Director of Enforcement at the CMA, said:

As a result of our investigations, a number of changes have been made across this sector to protect customers and help tackle concerns about auto-renewing subscriptions.

Today's announcement therefore concludes our investigations into

the online video gaming sector. Companies in other sectors which offer subscriptions that auto-renew should review their practices to ensure they comply with consumer protection law.

This announcement follows undertakings [agreed with Microsoft in January 2022](#) in relation to its online gaming subscriptions.

More information about the CMA's investigation is available on the [online gaming sector case page](#).

The CMA also recently launched the '[Online Rip-Off Tip-Off](#)', a campaign designed to make shoppers aware of the importance of understanding the terms of any deal they sign up to, giving out practical tips to help them protect themselves when shopping online.

1. For media enquiries, contact the CMA press office on 020 3738 6460 or [press@cma.gov.uk](mailto:press@cma.gov.uk).
2. Sony, as referred above, refers to Sony Interactive Entertainment Network Europe Limited.
3. Nintendo, as referred above, refers to Nintendo of Europe GmbH.
4. The undertaking referred to above applies to contracts between Sony and consumers for the supply of (a) PlayStation Plus, or (b) any online video gaming product which replaces, rebrands or includes PlayStation Plus (in whole or in part) and which is associated with a console and (in the case of either (a) or (b)) which is or can be subject to recurring billing. The undertaking builds on Sony's existing practices which include providing information and notifications to consumers when entering into PlayStation Plus subscriptions.
5. For the avoidance of doubt, the offering of this undertaking is not an admission that any person or firm has breached the law. Only a court can decide whether a breach has occurred.
6. An undertaking is a voluntary agreement a firm makes to address an enforcement authority's concerns and resolve an investigation without the need for court action.
7. The key pieces of consumer protection legislation relevant to the CMA's investigation are: the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 (CPRs); Part 2 of the Consumer Rights Act 2015 (CRA); and the Consumer Contracts (Information, Cancellation and Additional Charges) Regulations 2013 (CCRs). The CPRs contain a general prohibition against unfair commercial practices and specific prohibitions against misleading actions, misleading omissions and aggressive commercial practices. Part 2 of the CRA aims to protect consumers against unfair contract terms and notices and requires contract terms to be fair and transparent. The CCRs regulate the information that should be provided to consumers before they make a purchase, cancellation rights for certain contracts and the use of pre-ticked boxes for additional payments.
8. As part of its broader programme of work investigating unfair auto-renewal terms and practices, the CMA also secured undertakings from businesses offering anti-virus software services and published compliance principles for the sector. Details of the undertakings and

the compliance principles can be found on the [Anti-virus software investigation case page](#).

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## Communities across UK handed control of £2.6 billion levelling up funding

- UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) to spread opportunity and reverse the country's geographical disparities with £2.6 billion in funding
- Funding will match what was previously spent in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and each LEP area in England
- New approach will slash bureaucracy and give control to locally elected leaders

Communities across the United Kingdom will benefit from £2.6 billion of funding being allocated today to help spread opportunity and level up the country.

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund will see places that need it most draw up plans this year to deliver on their local priorities, based on a conditional allocation of funding over the next three years. This could include regenerating rundown high streets, fighting anti-social behaviour and crime, or helping more people into decent jobs – helping to revive communities, tackle economic decline and reverse geographical disparities in the UK.

Spreading opportunity and prosperity to all parts of the UK through community-led investment, local areas across England will see £1.58 billion, Scotland £212 million, Wales £585 million and Northern Ireland £127 million made available under the fund.

The funding delivers on the UK government's commitment to match the previous EU funding from the European Social Fund and European Regional Development Fund. However, the fund will be much more flexible and locally led, freeing communities from the bureaucratic, rigid and complex processes of the EU Structural Funds.

Bureaucracy will be slashed, and there will be far more discretion over what money is spent on. EU requirements for match funding, which impacted on poorer places, will be abolished. Instead of regional agencies, funding decisions will be made by elected leaders in local government, with input from local members of parliament and local businesses and voluntary groups.

The fund also includes a new £559 million adult numeracy programme for the whole UK, Multiply, which will support people with no or low-level maths

skills get back into work. The scheme will offer free personal tutoring, digital training, and flexible courses to improve adults' confidence and numeracy skills.

Driving forward the missions in the government's [Levelling Up White Paper](#), this fund is in addition to other levelling up funding, including the £4.8 billion [Levelling Up Fund](#), £150 million [Community Ownership Fund](#) and £3.6 billion [Towns Fund](#). On top of this, we're making available an additional £3.7 billion to councils this year.

The Spending Review also increased Scottish Government funding in each year by an average of £4.6 billion, Welsh Government funding by £2.5 billion, and £1.6 billion for the Northern Ireland Executive, delivering in real terms the largest block grants for the devolved administrations since the devolution settlements of 1998.

Secretary of State for Levelling Up Rt Hon Michael Gove MP said:

We have taken back control of our money from the EU and we are empowering those who know their communities best to deliver on their priorities.

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund will help to unleash the creativity and talent of communities that have for too long been overlooked and undervalued.

By targeting this funding at areas of the country that need it the most, we will help spread opportunity and level up in every part of the United Kingdom.

The allocation formula for UK Shared Prosperity Fund takes into account both the local population data, and a broadly based measure of need, including factors like unemployment and income levels. This is to ensure the most amount of money is going to areas which will truly benefit from the fund.

Funding for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund will be £2.6 billion between 2022 and 2025, with this figure reaching £1.5 billion per year by March 2025, delivering on the UK government's commitment to match the average spending of EU structural funds over the previous programme. Previous EU programmes ramped up and down, and areas will continue to receive EU funding until the end of 2024. Similarly, UK Shared Prosperity Fund will be increased from £400 million in 2022/23 to £1.5 billion in 2024/25, at which point it will match the EU funds it has replaced.

In England each Local Enterprise Partnership area will receive the same in real terms as it used to under EU funding, and within each Local Enterprise Partnership area an index of need will be used to allocated funding to each local authority. Scotland and Wales will receive the same in real terms as they used to receive under EU funding, and an index of need will be used to allocate funds to authorities and regions within Scotland and Wales. Based on consultation with local government and the Scottish and Welsh governments

these indexes will be bespoke to their local situations. Northern Ireland will receive a single allocation and will draw up a single investment plan for all of the country.

## UK summary including Multiply

Nation	Allocation
England	£1,588 million
Scotland	£ 212 million
Wales	£585 million
Northern Ireland	£127 million
Sub total (UK)	£2.5 billion

Multiply central element\* £129 million

**Total (UK)** £2.6 billion

\*This relates to a UK-wide digital platform for adult numeracy, as well as a programme of evaluation, including randomised control trials, to build the evidence of what works.

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## Innovative new projects to tackle reoffending and protect the public revealed

- Specialist schemes targeting criminals likely to reoffend backed by Government funding
- Focus on care leavers, drug addicts, abused women and short-sentence offenders
- Projects will tackle drivers of crime – such as unemployment, addiction and homelessness – and help to cut £18bn cost of reoffending

Today, the Government has confirmed it will support a further 11 projects through the Prison Leavers Project – a £20 million cross-government initiative helping offenders move on from their life of crime once they are released from jail.

With reoffending costing the taxpayer £18 billion and around 80 percent of offenders having at least one previous caution or conviction, the Government is committed to giving offenders a second chance to make a positive contribution to society and cut crime.

All the projects set to benefit from the almost £7 million pot tackle key drivers of offending – including addiction, unemployment, housing problems

and social isolation. Statistics prove that offenders who are released from prison with nowhere to live are around 50 percent more likely to break the law again. While those who have a job within 12 months of release, are up to nine percentage points less likely to reoffend.

The 11 pilot projects include:

- A scheme in London specifically for offenders on short sentences which provides employment training and helps re-establish broken family ties
- A peer-mentoring project in the West Midlands providing mental health support and guidance on housing and finance for men who have grown up in care
- Creating realistic work environments in prisons in the North West, with the help of local employers, to boost job prospects once offenders leave
- Specialist support for female offenders with a history of abuse, in Wales and the South-West, to help them settle back into the community

Crime, Policing and Probation Minister Kit Malthouse said:

These schemes cut straight to the heart of the reasons for reoffending – allowing us to find new and innovative ways to keep some of the hardest-to-reform criminals on the straight and narrow.

We know that having a job on release, a safe place to stay as well as supportive family and friends are some of the vital ingredients for a crime-free life.

Our pilots will provide support and hope, while helping us to reduce the £18 billion cost of repeat crime and better protect the public.

One London-based project benefitting from the £6.7million of government funding will help those on serial short sentences to go straight. Prison-leaver charity Bounce Back provides job opportunities – training offenders in their painting and decorating academy – and re-establishes broken but vital family ties so they have the support they need to turn their lives around.

In the West Midlands, charity Change, Grow, Live is helping offenders who have grown up in the care system to live crime-free lives through peer-mentoring and support with housing and employment coaching. Former offender Ian Thomas is one of the mentors for the project who is inspiring others after leaving his life of crime, drugs and homelessness to return to university and become a qualified Social Worker.

Ian Thomas, social worker, Change Grow Live project in the West Midlands said:

I've experienced first-hand how leaving care without proper support can lead to a life of crime, addiction and homelessness.

Thousands of prisoners have been in the care system, which shows need for projects like Change Grow Live in the West Midlands, which is driving real change among hard-to-reach groups.

If we give prison leavers the support network they desperately need, we can reduce reoffending and give them the opportunity to thrive in the community.

In the North-West, New Futures Network and charity Antz Junction are working with local employers to tackle skills shortages in the construction and haulage industries. Offenders in HMPs Lancaster Farms, Kirkham, Liverpool, Thorn Cross will be trained-up in prison with the prospects of leaving for real jobs and crime-free lives.

While in Wales and the South-West, the funding will help addiction charity the Nelson Trust target female offending, which is often driven by domestic abuse. Around 400 female offenders with a history of trauma and abuse will be supported through women's centres to settle back into community life. The pilot will offer access to housing and substance misuse support as well as facilitating contact between mothers and their children.

## Notes to editors

- The £6.7million government-funded Local Leadership and Integration Fund (LLIF) has been awarded to 11 pilots.
- Seven pilots received £3.9million in June 2021 and many have been running since autumn 2021:
  - Bounce Back
  - Catch22
  - Change Grow Live (Cheshire)
  - Change Grow Live (Midlands)
  - The Innovation Unit
  - NEPACS
  - New Futures Network/Antz Junction
- £2.8million has just been awarded to another four pilots which will begin in May 2022:
  - Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner for the Thames Valley (OPCCTV)
  - Llamau
  - Nelson Trust
  - St Giles Trust
- The pilots will be evaluated throughout their delivery, and up to 12 months after prison leavers are released, to learn which approaches are most effective in reducing reoffending.
- As part of the government Spending Review, £550 million was secured to

help cut reoffending and protect the public.

- Further information on the wider [Prison Leavers Project](#)
  - The remaining pilots include:
    - Catch22: Aims to reduce reoffending in East London by identifying prison leavers who are at risk of recall – providing a Recall Prevention Service both in custody and in the community. The pilot will work with offenders to identify the reasons why they might breach their licence conditions, and help them to access the right services, such as accommodation, and rebuild relationships to address those factors.
    - Change Grow Live (Cheshire): Aims to reduce crime in Cheshire by providing accommodation and support to prison leavers, including those with drug and alcohol addictions.
    - The Innovation Unit: Aims to reduce reoffending in the West Midlands by creating support networks for young prison leavers aged 18-25 who have been in care, planning their resettlement and helping them live independently.
    - NEPACS: Aims to reduce reoffending in young male prison leavers in County Durham with experience of the care system. With specialist therapy, , the pilot will focus on building their support network, help them to live independently, and improve literacy skills to boost job prospects
    - Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner for the Thames Valley: Providing a package of staff training and support for prison leavers in the Thames Valley to reduce homelessness and improve employment outcomes.
    - Llamau: Targeted interventions for young men in Wales, focusing on reducing homelessness, improving family relationships and community integration.
    - St Giles Trust – Providing housing and mental health support for offenders in Yorkshire with complex needs who are released on Friday, when many services are shut.
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## [UK government and Nobel Prize winner launch global code to tackle conflict-related sexual violence](#)

- the UK government, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Nadia Murad and Institute for International Criminal Investigations to launch global code of conduct with focus on better gathering of information about conflict-related sexual violence from survivors
- the Murad Code aims to ensure survivors can have their experiences

recorded safely, in a way that respects their wishes and human rights, improves the chance of justice and reduces trauma

- the government is committed to improving the global response to sexual violence in areas of conflict around the world, amid reports of rape following Russia's invasion of Ukraine

The UK government, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Nadia Murad and Institute for International Criminal Investigations will today (Wednesday 13 April) set out a new global code of conduct to improve the gathering and use of information about and pursuit of justice for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV).

The Murad Code – backed by UK funding and developed in partnership with campaign group Nadia's Initiative and the Institute for International Criminal Investigations – sets out minimum standards on how to safely and effectively collect evidence from survivors and witnesses on sexual violence in conflicts and other settings. The aim is for it to be recognised as the gold standard across the world.

Murad will make the announcement alongside Lord Tariq Ahmad, the UK Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict at a meeting of the UN Security Council in New York.

The UK is President of the Security Council throughout April and invited Nadia Murad, herself a survivor of sexual violence in Iraq and a vocal campaigner for others, to address the Council.

It comes amid reports of sexual violence following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Last week, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy told the Security Council that Russian forces in Bucha had gang-raped women, including in front of their children.

Investigations and testimonies from survivors are essential to hold perpetrators of CRSV to account, but they must be undertaken in a safe and ethical manner.

The Murad Code brings together existing minimum standards into one code that reduces the risk of survivors suffering further trauma in providing evidence.

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said:

It is absolutely unacceptable that sexual violence and rape are happening in conflicts around the world, and ending it is one of my top priorities.

I am appalled by the growing number of reports of sexual violence by Russian forces emerging from the conflict in Ukraine. The launch of the Murad Code is a vital step towards helping and supporting survivors and bringing perpetrators to justice for their crimes.

Since 2012, the UK has committed over £50 million to preventing sexual violence in conflict globally.

In conflict settings, rape and other forms of sexual violence can be a war crime, a crime against humanity and a form of torture. It is prohibited under international humanitarian law, international criminal law, international human rights law and UN Security Council resolutions.

Lord Ahmad said:

I am proud and humbled to join Nadia's Initiative and the Institute for International Criminal Investigations in releasing the Murad Code.

It is a global code of conduct for the collection of information and evidence from survivors of conflict-related sexual violence.

It has been shaped by survivors, governments, international organisations and civil society groups.

As it is our responsibility to place survivors' needs at the heart of our work, I urge everyone involved in documenting and investigating conflict-related sexual violence to follow the Murad Code. In fact, go further – it should become the gold standard for any NGO, government agency or charity in the field.

Nadia Murad said:

Efforts to end sexual violence are gaining momentum, in large part thanks to brave survivors around the world who have shared their stories. But too often, reporting sexual violence has negative consequences for survivors.

The Murad Code lays out clear and practical guidelines for centering the needs of survivors when collecting evidence, and ensuring that they receive justice and support, rather than repercussions. Survivors deserve at least that.

The Foreign Secretary has committed to step up UK action to tackle the scourge of conflict-related sexual violence and to leading a campaign to make sexual violence an international red line in war, on a par in abhorrence with the use of chemical weapons.

From 28 to 30 November 2022, the government will host an international conference London, marking ten years since the launch of the UK's Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative.

The conference will bring together the UK and its partners around the world to review progress made, identify shared challenges and agree further action.

The government is also exploring other options for strengthening the international response to conflict-related sexual violence, including a new international Convention that could help hold perpetrators to account.

### Notes to editors:

- Nadia Murad is the founder and president of Nadia's Initiative, a non-profit dedicated to rebuilding communities in crisis and advocating for survivors of sexual violence
- Nadia's life was brutally disrupted in 2014 when ISIS attacked her homeland in Sinjar, Iraq. Since Nadia's escape from ISIS captivity, she has become a powerful advocate for women in conflict settings and survivors of sexual violence worldwide
- in 2018, Nadia Murad and Denis Mukwege were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for "their efforts to end the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and armed conflict". She is the first Iraqi and Yazidi to be awarded a Nobel Prize
- Nadia's Initiative's current work is focused on the sustainable re-development of the Yazidi homeland in Sinjar and pursuing holistic justice for survivors of ISIS atrocities
- the Institute for International Criminal Investigations (IICI) is an independent, not-for-profit, non-governmental organisation providing criminal justice and human rights professionals with the training and knowledge necessary to investigate war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide and the most serious human rights violations
- the UK launched a £10 million civil society fund this month to support organisations in Ukraine, including those helping women and girls and people affected by conflict-related sexual violence. \*sexual violence in conflict leaves profound and lasting scars on survivors, their children and their communities. During a speech at 44th Session of the Human Rights Council, a survivor from the Democratic Republic of Congo said: "To be raped is synonymous with several words; it is to be dead in one's own flesh, one's soul, with a broken and irreparable heart"

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## [Health experts share priorities for Women's Health Strategy](#)

Press release

Report published summarising written responses to the women's health call for evidence from 436 organisations and experts in women's health



- Government publishes report summarising written responses from 436 organisations and experts from the Women's Health Strategy call for evidence
- Topics raised include the need for greater support for pregnancy loss and menopause training for clinicians
- Responses will help shape first government-led Women's Health Strategy in England as part of plans to level up health care

Health experts have called for a greater focus on care for older women and improved support services for people experiencing pregnancy loss to help shape the government's first-ever Women's Health Strategy for England.

A total of 436 organisations and experts in women's health – including from the charity sector, academia, professional bodies, clinicians and royal colleges – responded to a call for evidence to inform the government's approach to tackling gender health inequality.

In their submissions, published today (Wednesday 13 April), they called for a greater focus on the health needs of older women who can experience the same conditions as men in different ways, suggested improvements in training on menopause for healthcare professionals and highlighted the disparity in the provision of pregnancy loss support services.

The insight is in addition to nearly 100,000 responses from individuals, which together will inform the upcoming Women's Health Strategy to create a healthcare system that prioritises care on the basis of clinical need, not gender.

Minister for Women's Health Maria Caulfield said:

For generations, women have lived in a healthcare system primarily designed by men, for men. We are committed to tackling the gender health gap, and the publication of our strategy later this year will mark a significant step forward.

I want to thank the expert individuals and organisations who took the time to respond to our call for evidence. The insights you have provided have been stark and sobering, but will be pivotal to ensuring our strategy represents the first hand experiences of the health care system.

Topics highlighted were:

- Menstrual health and gynaecological conditions, including the impact of premenstrual syndrome (PMS) on someone's quality of life.
  - Fertility, pregnancy, pregnancy loss and maternal health, including women not feeling listened to during and after pregnancy and the provision of bereavement support services.
  - Menopause, including suggestions for improvements in training and guidelines for healthcare professionals.
  - Gynaecological and other cancers, including barriers to accessing high-quality, up to date information on risk factors for female cancers.
  - Mental health, including its interaction with other health conditions across women's life course.
  - Healthy ageing, including the need to increase focus on the health needs of older women and emphasise women may experience the same conditions as men in different ways.
  - Violence against women and girls, including the complications associated with hymenoplasty and barriers to accessing healthcare support for those who've been subject to years of violence and abuse
- The call to evidence ran from March to June 2021 and generated 110,123 responses. The Women's Health Strategy will be published later this year.

## **Background information**

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