

UN Human Rights Council 49: UK statement for the annual interactive debate on the rights of persons with disabilities

World news story

The UK welcomed the report and panel discussion during the annual interactive debate on the rights of persons with disabilities.



Thank you, Mr President,

The United Kingdom welcomes the report and panel discussion.

In February 2022, we published our FCDO disability inclusion and rights strategy 2022 to 2030, 'Building an inclusive future for all: a sustainable rights-based approach'.

In the strategy we made a number of commitments, which are in line with the report's recommendations. For example, we will work with other states and partners to strengthen capacity to collect, analyse, and use quality disaggregated data. We will also encourage integration of the Washington

Group questions on disability into household surveys, information and monitoring and evaluation systems.

This is critical to understand and address of the needs of disabled people and their households and the barriers to access, in order to better design and adapt policies and programmes so they are more accessible and effective.

Regarding the report's recommendations in humanitarian contexts, the UK is committed to ensuring humanitarian response efforts become more inclusive and we will continue to promote the routine, systematic collection and use of disaggregated data. Our top achievement here has been the design, delivery and dissemination of e-learning on how to use the Washington Group questions in humanitarian settings.

Distinguished panellists,

What more can states do to ensure that data on the needs and priorities of disabled people is translated into response plans in humanitarian contexts?

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[Outdoor civil weddings and civil partnerships made permanent](#)

Press release

Outdoor weddings at licenced venues in England and Wales will be legalised permanently after the change received overwhelming support from the public, faith groups and the wedding industry.



Photo: Brad Wakefield Photography

- Temporary measures introduced during the pandemic will continue

indefinitely.

- Move will provide greater flexibility and choice to couples and the wedding sector.
- Over 90% of people back permanent legalisation of outdoor weddings.

It will mean that marrying couples will continue to have greater choice in how they celebrate their big day. Temporary legislation allowing outdoor civil weddings and partnerships for the first time has been in place since last summer.

A government consultation found that 96% of respondents backed making this change permanent, while 93% supported extending it to religious weddings. Ministers will lay legislation today to legalise outdoor civil weddings and partnerships indefinitely. Reforms to religious ceremonies will be made in due course after the consultation found every major faith group supported the move.

Prior to last summer, civil ceremonies at a licensed wedding venue had to take place indoors or within a permanent outdoor structure, such as a bandstand.

Couples can now have the whole ceremony outside in the venue's grounds – providing them with greater flexibility and choice, as well as boosting the recovery of the wedding sector which saw many ceremonies postponed during the pandemic.

The move gives the wedding industry the certainty needed to invest in their services and locations for ceremonies before the end of the temporary legislation in April.

Justice Minister Tom Pursglove MP said:

A wedding is one of the most important days in a person's life and it is right that couples should have greater choice in how they celebrate their special occasion.

These reforms will allow couples to hold more personalised ceremonies and provide a welcome boost for the wedding sector.

An ongoing Law Commission report into marriage laws is due to be published in July and the government will carefully consider the recommendations once received. This report is exploring how to modernise and improve marriage law into a simple, fair and consistent legal structure. This includes widening the locations that people can get married at and whether more types of weddings should be legalised.

The government will set out its plans to legalise outdoor religious weddings in due course as this will require changes to primary legislation.

- These changes are being introduced on the 15th March via the laying of a

Statutory Instrument (SI) which amends the Marriages and Civil Partnerships (Approved Premises) Regulations 2005 to allow legal outdoor civil weddings and civil partnership registrations to take place within the grounds of Approved Premises.

- 93% of respondents to the consultation also supported the proposal to permit outdoor religious ceremonies in the grounds of places of worship, as long as this is permitted by the respective religious bodies. Religious groups who responded to the consultation noted that while there was no theological obligation to conduct a wedding within the curtilage of a church, these changes must be permissive in nature, and that existing protections to safeguard religious freedoms need to remain. All representatives of religious groups who responded to the consultation were in support of this proposal. These changes would require amendments to primary legislation and the associated procedural requirements are such that it is not possible to legislate within the same timeframe as this SI. This would allow marriages to take place in the grounds of religious buildings, such as outside of churches.
- The Marriages and Civil Partnerships (Approved Premises) (Amendment) Regulations 2022 will come into force on the 6th April 2022.
- The regulations apply only to Approved Premises – the changes cannot enable outdoor weddings to take place on religious premises or in outdoor areas that are not part of the grounds of Approved Premises.
- In order to hold legal outdoor weddings and civil partnership registrations, a venue must be an Approved Premises or must become an Approved Premises under the Marriages and Civil Partnerships (Approved Premises) Regulations 2005, as amended.
- Before the temporary changes were introduced last summer, premises could only be approved if they were a permanently immovable structure (or any boat or other permanently moored vessel) comprising at least one room which is to be approved for civil weddings and civil partnership registration.
- Existing Approved Premises will be permitted to use any outdoor areas in the venue for civil wedding and civil partnership registrations without having to re-apply for approval, subject to certain conditions.
- Ceremonies will now be able to take place fully outdoors or under a partially covered structure. The location for the ceremony within the outdoor areas must be assessed to be seemly and dignified. Other requirements for public access and signage must also be met.

- With the exception of Jewish and Quaker weddings, which for historical reasons can already take place outdoors, legal religious weddings will continue to take place in certified places of worship which are also registered for marriage, or churches and chapels of the Church of England or Church in Wales. The government will however work to take forward the proposals to extend provision to outdoor religious ceremonies. In due course, the government will put forward a Legislative Review Order to allow for outdoor religious weddings; this is since such a change would require an amendment to primary legislation.

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Legal aid sector put on sustainable footing for years to come

- Wide-ranging reforms will make the legal aid system fit for 21st century
- Up to an extra £135 million spent on legal aid every year, following independent review of fees
- Millions more will have access to legal aid as part of proposed reforms to the means test

Up to an extra £135 million will be spent on the sector every year to match the recommendation made by an independent review of the system, overseen by Sir Christopher Bellamy QC. When added to the extra £200 million each year to speed up the courts system, it will bring total taxpayer funding for criminal defence to £1.2 billion a year.

The funding boost sits alongside the most ambitious reform of criminal legal aid in decades that would ensure professionals are better paid for the work they actually carry out and help free up capacity in courts.

For example, one change would boost pay for lawyers representing suspects in police stations by 15% to tackle the perverse incentive that currently encourages lawyers to wait and represent defendants in Crown Courts because it pays better. The proposals will improve the advice available in police stations and stop cases going to court unnecessarily, delivering speedier justice to victims.

The proposals will also give more people the opportunity to forge a career in criminal law, whatever their background, by funding the training and accreditation of solicitors and solicitor advocates and removing barriers for members of the Chartered Institute of Legal Executives (CILEX).

The government plans also make the legal aid system fairer by making sure it gets to those who need it most. Proposed changes will open up access to civil

legal aid for around two million more people, and will remove the means test altogether for some applicants. Domestic abuse victims who are disputing house ownership will particularly benefit from our proposal that disputed assets will not count towards their wealth.

The financial cap on eligibility for Crown Court defendants will also be removed, ending the so-called 'Innocence Tax' which has forced some innocent people to pay their own legal costs despite being acquitted.

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

We owe our whole legal profession – solicitors, barristers, court staff and judiciary – a debt of gratitude for keeping the wheels of justice turning over the last two years.

That's why we are accepting Sir Christopher Bellamy's recommendation for an uplift in fees and a total of £135 million extra investment to ensure legal representation is there for those who most need it as we build back a stronger and fairer society after the pandemic.

The proposed changes to criminal legal aid are in step with the recommendations made by the independent review and are designed to make the legal aid system sustainable for the future. Other changes to modernise the legal aid system include:

- A restructuring of the fee schemes so they properly reflect the work that legal professionals do today
- Creating an Advisory Board, which will represent all parts of the profession, helping shape criminal legal aid policy moving forward.

The changes to the legal aid means test will be achieved by raising the income and capital thresholds for legal aid. This means that over 2 million more people in England and Wales will have access to civil legal aid and 3.5 million more will have access to criminal legal aid at the magistrates' court.

For the first time ever, legal representation will be made free for all under-18s and parents challenging doctors over withdrawal of their child's life support, as will legal help for families at inquests where there has been a potential breach of human rights.

[PM call with the Amir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani: 14 March 2022](#)

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke to the Amir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani.



The Prime Minister spoke to the Amir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, this afternoon.

They shared their horror at the conflict and humanitarian crisis unfolding in Ukraine. The Prime Minister welcomed Qatar's support to date and stressed that the international community must take a clear and united stand against Russian aggression.

The leaders discussed their concerns around volatility in the energy market and agreed to continue working together to improve global energy security, including on ensuring sustainable gas supplies and boosting renewables.

The Prime Minister reiterated the strength of the UK-Qatar partnership and looked forward to meeting His Highness Sheikh Tamim in person at the earliest opportunity.

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[PM meeting with Latvian Prime Minister](#)

Arturs Krišjānis Kariņš : 14 March 2022

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke to Latvian Prime Minister Arturs Krišjānis Kariņš today.



The Prime Minister met Latvian Prime Minister Arturs Krišjānis Kariņš at Downing Street this afternoon, to discuss the concerning developments in Ukraine and how Europe can wean itself off Russian hydrocarbons.

Both leaders said that President Putin had made a terrible and unforgivable mistake in Ukraine, and his indiscriminate attacks on innocent civilians had to stop.

The West also had to end its dependence on Russian hydrocarbons, and both leaders agreed to rapidly explore nuclear and renewable options.

Deepening defence ties between the two countries and shoring up European security was also vital, the leaders said.

The Prime Minister reiterated that Latvia could depend on the UK to stand with its NATO partners today and in the future, and the UK's support to European security was unwavering.

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