

Government announces preferred candidate for Information Commissioner

News story

John Edwards is the Government's preferred candidate for Information Commissioner, the Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden announced today.



John Edwards is currently New Zealand's Privacy Commissioner and will bring with him a wealth of data regulatory experience, as Privacy Commissioner but also from 20 years of practicing law and specialising in information law.

Mr Edwards will now appear before MPs on the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee for pre-appointment scrutiny on 9th September 2021.

Under the Data Protection Act, the Information Commissioner is appointed by Her Majesty by Letters Patent on the basis of fair and open competition and on the recommendation from ministers (the Secretary of State for Digital Culture, Media and Sport, through the Prime Minister).

Ministers were assisted in their decision-making by an Advisory Assessment Panel which included a departmental official and a senior independent panel member approved by the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

Notes to editors

- John Edwards was appointed to the independent statutory position of New Zealand's Privacy Commissioner in February 2014.
- He is currently serving his second five-year term, responsible for the implementation of New Zealand's newly passed Privacy Act 2020.
- His Office provides independent comment, advice and compliance action on significant personal information policies and issues.
- He chaired the Global Privacy Assembly (then known as the International Conference of Data Protection and Privacy Commissioners) from 2014-17, and has chaired and hosted a number of international conferences.
- Prior to his appointment, John practiced law in Wellington, New Zealand, for more than 20 years specialising in information law, representing a

wide range of public and private sector clients.

- He has held a number of independent statutory appointments, including as watchdog for those in compulsory mental health care, and intellectual disability services.
- This appointment process was run in accordance with the Governance Code on Public Appointments.

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Sentences increased for 61 criminals

[New statistics for 2020](#) (MS Excel Spreadsheet, 149KB) show 61 offenders had their sentences increased, after the Attorney General and Solicitor General (the Law Officers) challenged their sentences because they thought they were too low.

Under the Unduly Lenient Sentence (ULS) scheme, victims of crime, members of the public, and the Crown Prosecution Service can ask for certain Crown Court sentences to be reviewed if they believe they are too low. Only one referral is required in order for it to be considered by the Attorney General's Office.

The Law Officers carefully consider each case personally, and if they think the sentence is too low, they will ask the Court of Appeal to review the sentence. They can only ask the Court of Appeal to review a sentence with a view to increasing it if that sentence is not just lenient but unduly so, such that the sentencing judge made a gross error or imposed a sentence outside the range of sentences available.

The statistics show that in the vast majority of cases, judges get it right. There has also been a fall in the number of referrals for sentences to be reviewed.

The Law Officers received 552 applications for sentences to be reviewed which met the necessary criteria to be considered under the Scheme. Of these, 97 were referred to the Court of Appeal. The Court of Appeal agreed that 61 sentences were too low, and as a result 61 offenders had their sentences increased. 5 people were imprisoned after avoiding prison time at their original sentencing. In a further 16 cases, the Court of Appeal agreed that it was right to ask for the sentence to be reviewed (known as 'granting leave') but these sentences were not ultimately increased.

Of the 61 offenders who were referred to the Court of Appeal, these related to crimes in the following categories:

- Child sex offences

- Aggravated Burglary
- Causing death by dangerous driving
- Causing grievous bodily harm with intent
- Distributing indecent images of children
- Possession with intent to supply Class A drugs
- Manslaughter
- Murder
- Rape
- Robbery
- Stalking
- Wounding with intent

The scheme allows judges to provide guidance to assist sentencing for future cases. In 2020, the Attorney General's Office identified, in referrals received, a group of cases involving 3 offenders who engaged in sexual communications with people who they thought were children or their parents – they were in fact communicating with undercover police officers or vigilante groups. The Attorney General raised these cases with the Court of Appeal. As a result the Court provided guidance which emphasised that where a defendant sets out to sexually abuse a child, even though there is no child, the sentence should reflect the seriousness of the harm the defendant had intended to cause that child.

Commenting on the Scheme's performance in 2020, the Attorney General, Rt Hon Michael Ellis QC MP, said:

"The ULS scheme allows anyone, including victims of crime, to ask for a review of certain sentences they believe are too low. In 2020, this meant that over 60 criminals had their sentences increased and many more victims and their families had a second chance at justice.

"In the vast majority of cases judges get it right, but the scheme remains an important tool to ensure that cases can be reviewed where there may have been a gross error in the sentencing decision. It's not just about increasing sentences, the scheme also provides an important avenue for my office to ask the Court of Appeal for guidance, to help shape the sentencing framework and ensure more consistent sentencing for complex cases."

The Law Officers have 28 days from the date of sentencing to refer a case to the Court of Appeal, so it's important for them to receive a referral as early as possible in order to properly consider a case. A referral must be lodged with the Court of Appeal no later than 5pm on the last business day of the 28 days.

The ULS scheme came into force on 1st February 1989. It was introduced after public outcry over the lenient sentencing of the offenders involved in the 1986 rape of a 21 year old. The victim was brutally raped by a gang of burglars at her father's vicarage.

The scheme was extended in 2017 to include an additional 19 terror-related offences, and again in 2019 to cover more sexual offences as well as coercive control and stalking and harassment involving violence.

ENDS

Notes

- The first ever ULS hearing took place in July 1989 for a man who committed incest on his daughter and had his sentence doubled from 3 to 6 years.
- The ULS scheme was legislated for within the Criminal Justice Act 1988.
- Anyone is able to ask a Crown Court sentence to be reviewed by the Attorney General's Office and the progress of referrals can be followed on the website. The ULS scheme only applies to certain Crown Court offences. Details of some of the offences covered by the scheme can be found on gov.uk and the CPS website.
- Under the ULS scheme a case must be referred to the Court of Appeal within 28 days of the date of sentencing. This deadline cannot be extended and in order to ensure we have time to properly consider a case we ask that referrals are made early in the process. It is very difficult to consider a case which is submitted late and it is not possible to do so outside of working hours.

[Back to school campaign launches](#)

Today (Thursday 26 August) the government launches its back to school and college campaign to set out the experience that students can 'get back to' from September, with restrictions such as bubbles eased to allow a full return to sport, music, drama, science experiments and being with their friends.

Schools and colleges are maintaining proportionate protective measures such as testing, ventilation and extra hygiene precautions that help keep children and staff safe and minimise disruption to face-to-face education.

Secondary schools and colleges are offering two tests on-site at the start of term, followed by continued regular testing at home. Students aged 16 and 17, as well as younger children aged 12-15 in certain eligible groups are encouraged to take up the offer of the vaccine.

The campaign features Matt Richards, gold medal-winning swimmer at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, who draws on his own experience of regular covid testing as part of Team GB to encourage secondary and college students to continue testing from September.

The campaign also features Dr Ranj Singh, NHS consultant paediatrician and TV presenter who will reassure students and families about the return to school. Students and teachers appear across social, digital and radio adverts talking about everything they are looking forward to during the new school term.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

I know the return to school and college this September is a huge moment for students and education staff, who have all shown enormous resilience over the past 18 months.

It is the point when our focus can shift away from the disruption of covid and on to learning, enrichment and recovery.

I have every confidence that school and college staff, parents and students will continue to work together admirably, following pragmatic measures like testing and vaccinations to minimise disruption and keep children where they belong – in the classroom.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

As students in England prepare to return to school they can look forward to a more normal year – seeing their friends, getting back to sports and activities, and of course learning.

As well as offering vaccines to 16 and 17 year olds in England, testing will remain an important part of keeping our young people safe as we go into the new school year. I urge parents to encourage their children to take regular tests, to help break chains of transmission and stop the virus spreading.

The campaign launches as pupils and students began returning to education in Leicester and Leicestershire yesterday (Wednesday 25 August) for the start of the autumn term.

Chief Executive of the UK Health Security Agency Jenny Harries said:

Around one in three people who have coronavirus have no symptoms, so it is vital that we continue rapid testing in schools to help uncover hidden cases of the virus at the start of term.

We encourage children to come into school to take their first tests in-person and then to continue testing twice a week from home. We will continue to work closely with schools to ensure that all children can get back to the classroom and enjoy learning with less interruptions.

We also encourage all children eligible for the vaccine to get their jabs when offered. Alongside testing, this will help to keep children in the classroom and their families safe.

Matt Richards, Team GB gold medal-winning swimmer at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics said:

Regular testing was essential then and still is now to ensure everyone is kept safe and not spreading the virus. The same goes for school. Make sure you test before you go back, and twice weekly – even if you don't have symptoms – so you can get back to the things you love like competitive sports and school matches.

Dr Ranj Singh, NHS consultant paediatrician and TV presenter said:

As Covid-19 becomes a virus we learn to live with, delivering face to face education, without disruption is vital to support our children's mental and physical health and wellbeing. There is a low risk of coronavirus in children compared to other ages groups, and the benefits of education continue to outweigh the covid health risk to children and students.

Social and digital advertising will launch today alongside wider engagement with the teaching profession and local communications. The campaign will run until early September.

The launch of the campaign comes as the government invests £25 million in providing carbon dioxide monitors to state-funded education settings, helping them take action if they identify poor ventilation, or be reassured that ventilation is sufficient across their classrooms and staff rooms.

Parents are encouraged to visit [gov.uk/backtoschool](https://www.gov.uk/backtoschool) for information and practical guidance to help them plan for their children's return to school.

Leaflets explaining more about the safety measures in place will be made available over the coming days.

Schools received guidance in July setting out the measures they should implement from September, including maintaining increased hygiene and ventilation, but removing bubbles and face coverings.

The Department for Education has also updated its guidance for schools on how to respond if they see an increase in cases. Any reintroduction of measures such as wearing of face coverings should not be taken lightly, only be for a defined period, and should account for the detrimental impact on the delivery of education.

Schools are expected to continue offering immediate access to remote education where young people test positive for the virus and need to isolate.

Grant funding will be available for schools and colleges to claim to provide internet connections to help disadvantaged pupils who may need to learn remotely. They will be able to claim up to £75 over three months to provide mobile dongles or broadband routers for pupils.

A small team of attendance advisers are also being recruited to work with local authorities and multi-academy trusts to provide advice, guidance and

support on attendance where absence rates are higher than average.

[Official Development Assistance funds of the British Government for Cuban Projects](#)

UKinCuba invites interested organisations to submit project proposals for cooperation between the United Kingdom and Cuba in priority areas for both countries.

[Official Development Assistance funds of the British Government for projects in Cuba](#)

Deadline: September 6, 2021

The British Embassy in Havana invites interested organisations to submit project proposals to be implemented during the British financial year 2021-22 (April 2021 to March 2022) to support cooperation between the United Kingdom and Cuba in priority areas for both countries.

This support is channelled through small-scale project interventions (up to £10,000/ 343,707CUP/ USD15,452), but with potential for greater impact. It is important to consider that the project funds will be allocated depending on their availability and according to high quality activities that deliver good value for money.

Priorities in Cuba

The British Embassy in Havana is interested in financing innovative projects, with tangible objectives and measurable policy outcomes. We remind applicants that it is not possible to finance pure academic research projects.

Proposals should be related to at least one of the following policy areas:

- COVID-19, vaccine recovery and global health security
- Food security
- Economic recovery
- Climate and Biodiversity

- Open Societies

The Embassy might consider other proposals that do not fully fit into these priority policy areas if related to the general objectives of the Embassy's work. These will be assessed case by case.

What to consider

- Project activities must be fully implemented before the end of the financial year in March 2022
- 85% of the total Embassy allocation must be implemented by mid-December 2021. Therefore, capacity to deliver before that date would be an asset
- Payments will be made quarterly. It should be made clear in the project proposals in the case that the implementer does not have the financial capacity to deliver the project, in full or in part. Exceptions related to advance payments are not guaranteed
- Administration costs must not exceed the 10% of the total project budget
- Proposals that are co-financed by other donors are welcome. This information must also be specified at the time of submitting the proposal

Funds for capital purchases; this includes infrastructure, cars, furniture, computer equipment, amongst others, are not suggested but will be assessed case by case. The funding cannot be used for flight tickets above economy class.

Eligibility criteria

To be eligible, your organization or agency must be a legal entity, a not-for-profit commercial company, a registered non-governmental organization (NGO) or government, or an academic or research institution, while proving:

- previous experience in project management and administration
- previous experience working with international agencies or organizations would be considered an asset
- proof of legal registration
- sufficient technical, financial, human, and logistical capacity to complete the project proposal

How to bid

The application process must include the following forms: * A project proposal form under £10,000 * A detailed budget breakdown (Activity Based Budget, ABB spreadsheet) of the specific activities to be developed by the project (financial breakdown), monthly

Project proposals will not be considered if they are not submitted together with the detailed ABB supporting how the budget will be spent and demonstrating an efficient use of financial resources.

The ABB should include as much detail as possible and it should be reflected

on the currency that the implementer is going to receive the funding.

All required documents should be sent to the email address:

adriana.siguenza@fcdowebmail.gov.uk ; denis.puertas@fcdowebmail.gov.uk with the subject 'Project proposal form' and including, in the email's body, a brief reference to the organization and the project title.

Only the proposals approved by the Embassy Programme Board will be considered for implementation.

Timetable

Date	Action
September 6	Deadline for submission of proposals
September 20	Notification to all participating institutions about the success of the submitted proposals, accepted and approved for moving forward to the implementation stage

If approved, additional information will be requested to ensure the due diligence process, and finally a contract or financing agreement will be signed with the British Embassy in Havana.

Documents for downloading

1. Proposal Form – under £10k (MS Word Document, 288KB) – [Project Proposal Form under £10,000 \(MS Word Document, 289KB\)](#) (MS Word Document, 61.6KB)
2. Activity Based Budget template (MS Excel Spreadsheet, 29.6KB) – [Activity Based Budget Form \(ABB\) \(MS Excel Spreadsheet, 30.2KB\)](#) (MS Excel Spreadsheet, 27.2KB)