

Extra support for thousands navigating the legal system

- increased £4 million funding to help vulnerable people in civil and family legal disputes
- focus on early intervention to resolve issues before going to court
- follows proposals that see extra 2 million people eligible for legal aid

Around £4 million will be awarded to charities and organisations providing legal help this financial year – an increase on the £3 million provided in previous years.

The grants will help ensure people can get speedy support to understand how to deal with the legal problems they face.

For people who do go on to represent themselves in civil and family cases, the support will focus on resolving their legal problems at an earlier stage with access to specialist legal guidance in person, by telephone or online, to deal with the problem before it escalates.

Grants will also fund services to help people through the court process, including online guides and in person support on the day of their appearance.

It follows the government's proposals for two million more people to have access to legal aid following changes to the means test. Both income and capital thresholds will be raised, while disputed assets will not count towards an applicant's threshold, benefitting victims of domestic abuse.

Justice Minister Lord Bellamy QC said:

This funding and our wider legal aid reforms will ensure that those who encounter a legal problem will have someone to turn to, regardless of their financial circumstances.

It will help more people resolve issues quickly, away from court, saving them the money and the stress that can be caused.

The Ministry of Justice has provided £21 million to organisations providing legal support for litigants in person since 2015 and research shows that this kind of support helps almost two-thirds of people resolve their problems without going to court.

The department is partnering with the Access to Justice Foundation (ATJF), who will administer the funding, with expressions of interest open to organisations from today.

Joint Chief Executive Officer of the ATJF Clare Carter said:

We're delighted to be working with Ministry of Justice on the new Help Accessing Legal Support grant. The Access to Justice Foundation exists to support organisations helping people most in need address their social welfare legal issues.

This grant will help a wide range of legal support and advice organisations across England and Wales help people resolve their legal issues at the earliest opportunity.

What this means in practice is that more people will be able to get advice online, on the phone or in person which helps them better understand and resolve their housing, benefits, debt, employment or family issues. In this way, more people will be able to access support at an early stage in the process, before things escalate. We will also be looking to support services which exist to assist people through the court process.

The types of frontline organisations that have benefited from government funding for legal support in the past include an independent advice agency in East London supporting individuals with the required documentation and forms, as well as tribunal and court representation on welfare, housing and debt issues.

Notes to editors

- The Legal Support for Litigants in Person Grant (LSLIP) [interim report](#) has provided solid evidence that providing legal support services helps people to resolve their issue without it progressing to court: 62% of clients resolved their problems with the support of generalised advice, casework and early specialist legal assistance, avoiding the need to go to court.
- You can apply for grants here: [Our Grants – The Access To Justice Foundation \(atjf.org.uk\)](#)
- An example of a person supported through an organisation funded through the AJTF includes Jane (not her real name) from Devon a young mother with two small children and domestic abuse victim living with PTSD and depression.
 - Jane stopped contact between the children and their father over safeguarding concerns including neglect and emotional abuse (continuously shouting and swearing at the children). The father retaliated by filing a Child Arrangements Order application to resume contact.
 - Jane's mental health problems and vulnerability meant she struggled to respond by herself, especially considering that the required paperwork and documents dealt with a very difficult and troubling time in her life where she was constantly abused and subject to coercive control. Her local free legal advice charity, an Access to Justice Foundation grantee, drafted these documents for her so that she could comply with the court's directions and represent her arguments and concerns effectively.

Poor record keeping means Birmingham charity is unable to fully account for £100,000, inquiry finds

Press release

The Charity Commission has concluded its statutory inquiry into One Community Organisation, finding misconduct and/or mismanagement.



In an official report, the Commission has concluded the trustees of a Birmingham based charity are responsible for misconduct and/or mismanagement, over financial and governance oversights.

One Community Organisation was registered as a charity in 2009 and organises events and education programmes for the deaf/blind and special educational needs community.

The inquiry found that the trustees had agreed that the chair of trustees would make payments on behalf of the charity using his own bank account because the charity didn't have its own bank card. However, the chair would reimburse himself without the supervision or authorisation of another trustee. The trustees' poor record keeping also meant they could not provide the inquiry with supporting documentation for the reimbursement of around £100,000 spent in this way, meaning the inquiry could not conclude that the money was spent solely in furtherance of the charity's objects.

Transactions made by the chair on behalf of the charity using his own bank account were also not included in the charity's accounts for the financial years ending in December 2017 and 2018. This means they understated the charity's income and expenditure by between £70,000 and £80,000 for both years.

The statutory inquiry also found that the trustees lacked a basic understanding of the charity's governing document and their duties as

trustees. This resulted in a number of governance failures including the charity operating outside of the geographical area stated on its governing document, not identifying or managing conflicts of interest and making decisions without the required number of trustees.

The regulator issued the trustees with an Action Plan to improve the charity's overall governance and decision-making procedures, including to update the charity's financial controls policy, familiarise themselves with Commission guidance on conflicts of interest and appoint a professional accountant to assist with record keeping and accounting duties. The trustees have since implemented the Action Plan.

Amy Spiller, Head of Investigations at the Commission, said:

The trustees' failures in this case resulted in significant amounts of charity money being unaccounted for. This is unacceptable and amounts to misconduct and/or mismanagement.

I hope that the Commission's intervention in this case means the charity is now able to deliver on its charitable purposes and improve the lives of the people it was set up to support.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

1. The Charity Commission is the independent, non-ministerial government department that registers and regulates charities in England and Wales. Its purpose is to ensure charity can thrive and inspire trust so that people can improve lives and strengthen society.
2. The Commission opened the inquiry on 01 December 2020. View the full [inquiry report](#).

Published 12 July 2022

[UN Human Rights Council 50: Universal Periodic Review adoption – Iceland](#)

World news story

UK delivers statement during the Universal Periodic Review adoption for Iceland



Thank you, Mr President.

The United Kingdom welcomes the engagement of Iceland with the Universal Periodic Review process and its commitment to promoting and protecting human rights, both at home and around the world.

We are pleased by Iceland's acceptance of our recommendation to build upon the 2021 Human Slavery act by increasing training for police, prosecutors and judges on how to investigate and prosecute modern slavery, and sharing its experiences internationally.

We also welcome Iceland's decision to examine the introduction of a criminal law provision that expressly considers racist motivation of an offence as an aggravating circumstance. We recommend that this examination is positively and swiftly concluded and focus is placed on its implementation.

We would encourage Iceland to submit an optional mid-term report on progress in implementing all the recommendations which have been accepted.

We would reiterate our thanks for Iceland's open and constructive approach to the human rights challenges raised at its periodic review.

Thank you.

Published 12 July 2022

First ever Patient Safety Commissioner appointed

- The independent Commissioner will act as a champion for patients and lead a drive to improve the safety of medicines and medical devices
- Dr Hughes will improve how the healthcare system listens to patients, the government and the NHS to put patients first

The Health and Social Care Secretary Steve Barclay has today appointed Dr Henrietta Hughes OBE as the first ever Patient Safety Commissioner for England.

Adding to and enhancing existing work to improve the safety of medicines and medical devices, the appointment of a Commissioner is in response to the recommendations from Baroness Cumberlege's review into patient safety, published in 2020.

Dr Hughes will be an independent point of contact for patients, giving a voice to their concerns to make sure they are heard. She will help the NHS and government better understand what they can do to put patients first, promote the safety of patients, and the importance of the views of patients and other members of the public.

Bringing with her a wealth of experience in patient care as the National Guardian for the NHS, where she encouraged staff to speak up and supported whistle-blowers, Dr Hughes will be a champion for patients. She will continue to practice as a GP and chair of Childhood First, a charity that promotes and furthers the care, treatment and rehabilitation of children and adolescents.

Health and Social Care Secretary Steve Barclay said:

It is essential that we put patient safety first and continue to listen to and champion patients' voices.

Dr Henrietta Hughes brings a wealth of experience with her as the first ever Patient Safety Commissioner to improve the safety of medicines and medical devices and her work will help support NHS staff as we work hard to beat the Covid backlogs.

Patient Safety Commissioner Henrietta Hughes said:

I am humbled and honoured to be appointed as the first Patient Safety Commissioner. This vital role, recommended in First Do No Harm, will make a difference to the safety of patients in relation to medicines and medical devices.

Patients' voices need to be at the heart of the design and delivery of healthcare. I would like to pay tribute to the incredible courage, persistence and compassion of all those who gave evidence to the report, their families and everyone who continues to campaign tirelessly for safer treatments.

I will work collaboratively with patients, the healthcare system and others so that all patients receive the information they need, all patients' voices are heard and the system responds quickly to keep people safe.

The First Do No Harm report, led by Baroness Cumberlege and published in 2020 explored issues relating to the use of Primodos, sodium valproate and pelvic mesh, and was commissioned because women did not feel listened to or their concerns acknowledged.

It highlighted the need to better protect and listen to patients and recommended the creation of an independent Patient Safety Commissioner. In July 2021, the government published its formal response to the recommendations set out in this report including a commitment to appoint a Patient Safety Commissioner with a remit covering medicines and medical devices.

The government continues to take action to improve patient safety. A statutory duty of candour has been implemented that requires Trusts to inform patients if their safety has been compromised, legal protections for whistle-blowers have been put in place, and a NHS Patient Safety Strategy was published in 2019 to create a safety, learning culture across the NHS. The Health and Care Act 2022 also established the Health Services Safety Investigations Body to investigate patient safety incidents in England.

This appointment was made following an open competition, in line with the Governance Code for Public Appointments, and following a pre-appointment scrutiny hearing with the Health and Social Care Committee.

[Designs framework call for views](#)

The designs framework enables rights holders to protect designs and enforce their rights. The [call for views](#) sought views and evidence on opportunities to improve the designs framework in the UK. This will help the government ensure the UK's designs framework works for the designers, businesses and consumers that use it.

Responses to the call for views were received on three broad areas – new opportunities, future technologies, and better regulation. The [government response](#) provides a summary of the responses received. It sets out issues for

further consideration, including areas for future consultation. These issues include:

- how to simplify the designs regime, in particular for [unregistered designs](#)
- how to improve guidance for designers, including those who do not normally engage with government directly
- options around search and examination
- the relationship between design and copyright law, and if there is a need for reform or guidance
- concerns about disclosure requirements for supplementary unregistered designs, including uncertainty in relation to simultaneous disclosure
- if the current format requirements for how designs are represented should be updated
- how to ensure the designs system is flexible enough to support developments in technology
- options for a possible deferment provision
- measures that could be introduced to make enforcement easier for all rights owners
- evidence to support views on the extension of criminal sanctions for unregistered design infringement

The UK has a vibrant design industry. A designs framework that supports designers, and encourages overseas investment, will help give the UK a competitive edge. Following the UK's departure from the European Union (EU), we have new flexibilities to define the domestic designs regime. As the UK negotiates trade deals with international partners, a modern and flexible designs framework will help make the most of these new opportunities and help our design industry flourish.

The Intellectual Property Office's Chief Executive, Tim Moss, said:

In a competitive global marketplace, great design helps UK products stand out, demonstrate quality and reach new customers all over the world.

The designs framework is a crucial element of our IP system. Through this review, we want to ensure it remains fit to embrace the challenges of an increasingly digital future, helping to unleash the potential of the UK's creative and innovative industries.

Matthew Ridley, Chair of Chartered Institute of Patent Attorneys' Designs and Copyright Committee, said:

We have appreciated the opportunity to respond to the call for views, and look forward to providing further input at consultation. We are pleased that the government response acknowledges the

benefits of the existing speed and value of the UK designs registration system.

Further consultation will provide further opportunity to identify improvements to the UK design framework – particularly in the areas of simplifying the unregistered design and copyright systems, considering the searching and examination of registered designs and implementing a harmonised deferment provision under UK law. We look forward to further engagement with government on these important areas.

Cat Drew, Chief Design Officer at the Design Council said:

The design economy is a significant and growing contributor to economic growth. Our departure from the EU, the disruption of the Covid pandemic and the climate emergency are seeing us reconfigure and re-establish global trade routes. An IP framework that supports all designers, and protects sustainable and equitable innovation will help ensure the design economy remains a major driver of exports.

The climate emergency requires us to redesign almost every aspect of our lives. Global collaboration is crucial. We need an IP system that allows ideas to be shared and spread, protecting and rewarding imagination and creativity.

We welcome the IPO's recognition that these are complex issues, and look forward to working with them on further consultation to get this challenge right.

Notes to editors:

- the Intellectual Property Office (IPO) is the government agency responsible for ensuring the designs framework supports rights holders to protect designs and enforce their rights
- the call for views ran for 8 weeks between January and March 2022 and received 57 responses. The IPO also held a number of round-table events
- in addition to the call for views, the IPO published a survey aimed at people with an interest in designs and how they are protected, but who do not consider themselves experts on IP. The survey received 288 responses
- responses to the call for views were received from designers (5), design consultants (2), academics (2), legal firms and professionals (17), legal trade bodies and professional bodies (7), other trade bodies (10),

small and medium enterprises (SMEs) (9), large enterprises (4) and other (1)

- responses to the designs survey came predominantly from lone designers (58%) and small businesses employing fewer than 10 people (22%). This provides additional insight into how these groups use design protection in the UK