

Transport Secretary cracks down on drug-driving to protect the public

- proposals require drug-drivers to undertake rehabilitation courses before being allowed back behind the wheel
- reform would bring penalties for drug-driving in line with drink-driving
- call for evidence helps keep high-risk offenders off our roads and looks at how medical cannabis impacts road safety

Drug-drivers could be required to undertake rehabilitation courses before being allowed back behind the wheel, under new plans to address this underestimated social problem.

Drink-drive related deaths and injuries are now very rare on UK roads, with deaths having fallen 88% between 1979 and 2015. However, there has been an increase in drug-related driving offences, with over 12,000 convicted in 2019 and 44% committed by reoffenders.

In 2020, 713 people were seriously injured in drug-driving collisions, up from 499 in 2016, and some police forces are arresting more drug drivers than drink-drivers. That's why the government is taking action to protect the public and make drug-driving as much of a social taboo as drink-driving.

Currently, those convicted of drug-driving are handed a driving ban, prison sentence or fine by the courts, but aren't required to complete rehabilitation courses before resuming driving – unlike drink-drivers.

In a [call for evidence](#), government is asking whether drug-drivers should likewise have to undergo rehabilitation, helping better protect the public.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

Drink-driving is now rightly seen as a social taboo by most of us in this country and we have worked hard to drive down drink-drive related deaths.

But, if we are to make our roads safer still, there is no room to be lax on drug-driving, which is why I have launched this call for evidence today.

It's only right that drug-drivers must undergo rehabilitation before getting back behind the wheel, helping protect the public from this hidden problem and stamping out drug-driving for good.

Statistics show non-attendees to drink-driving rehabilitation courses are over twice as likely to commit a new drink-driving offence within 3 years, so by offering high-risk drug-driving offenders the same support, government hopes to bring down the number of repeat offenders.

RAC head of roads policy, Nicholas Lyes, said:

Drug-driving ruins lives and threatens the safety of all road users. We welcome proposals to offer drug-driving offenders rehabilitation courses, in the same way those caught drink-driving are offered them, because the evidence shows this helps to reduce reoffending and improves road safety.

Professor Kim Wolff, MBE, King's College London, said:

I was delighted to see the launch of the consultation on a high-risk offender (HRO) scheme for drug-drivers and the drug driving rehabilitation (DDR) course, as part of an ongoing programme of work being undertaken by the Department for Transport (DfT) to improve road safety.

Data gathered over the last 6 years has enabled DfT to identify through an expert panel very high-risk drug-driving behaviours warranting the need for a high risk offender scheme, which rolled out alongside the DDR, will help improve driver behaviours as well as provide more general societal benefits.

The call for evidence launched today (4 April 2022) will also ask whether we should bring the way specimens are taken in line with current medical practice by using vacuum blood extraction, decreasing the risk of bloodborne viruses to healthcare professionals.

It will also seek views on the relationship between medicinal cannabis and road safety, in another move to ensure road safety policy keeps up to date with changing societal norms.

This is the first of several steps government is taking this year to reduce the problem of drink and drug driving.

Later this year, government will seek views on other drink and drug driving matters, such as failing to stop after a collision and the criminal use of vehicles.

This follows the ongoing success of the government's [THINK! campaign](#), which has been educating drivers about the dangers of drink-driving since 2000.

[£500 million to develop the adult](#)

social care workforce

- The offer will level up opportunities for the social care workforce by developing their skills and training to deliver the best quality of care.
- The support laid out by government is the next step in the recovery of the workforce after the pandemic

People working in adult social care in England will benefit from at least £500 million from the Health and Social Care Levy to improve recruitment, retention, progression, and staff wellbeing.

In total the Levy will generate a record £36 billion over the next three years which will be invested in the health and social care system to ensure it has the long-term resource it needs while working to reduce patient waiting times and speed up diagnoses, including to clear the Covid backlog in the NHS.

Half a billion from the £5.4 billion dedicated to adult social care from the Levy, which comes into force on Wednesday 6 April, forms a package of support for the social care workforce as part of the adult social care reform White Paper, [People at the Heart of Care](#).

The funding will attract new staff into the sector and support those already in it by providing significant investment in individual learning and development and supporting staff mental health and wellbeing.

Minister of State for Care and Mental Health Gillian Keegan said:

I am incredibly proud of all the social care staff who have worked so hard, particularly during the pandemic.

As we recover from Covid, we must look to the future and to reform – this £500 million package of support will boost workforce recruitment, allow staff to progress in their careers in the sector and very importantly, ensure staff wellbeing is better supported.

The type of genuinely transformational change cannot be accomplished overnight. We know staff will need continued support, but we hope this package will level up opportunities for current and future social care staff.

The offer laid out by government will be vital in the recovery of the social care system from the pandemic, including:

- A knowledge and skills framework, career pathways and linked investment for learning and development to support progression for care workers and registered managers
- Funding for [Care Certificates](#), alongside significant work to create a

delivery standard recognised across the sector to improve transferability across settings, so care workers do not need to repeat the Care Certificate when moving roles

- Continuous professional development budgets for registered nurses, nursing associates, occupational therapists and other allied health professionals
- Investment in social worker training
- Initiatives to provide wellbeing and mental health support and to improve access to occupational health to support staff resilience and recovery following their role in the pandemic
- A new digital hub for the workforce to access support, information and advice, and a portable record of learning and development
- New policies to identify and support best recruitment practices locally
- Exploration of new national and local policies to ensure consistent implementation of the above, as well as higher standards of employment and care provided

The pandemic put unprecedented pressure on the NHS. The number of people waiting for elective care in England is at 6 million – up from 4.4 million before the pandemic – and this is expected to rise, as up to 10 million people didn't come forward for treatment during the pandemic.

The necessary, fair and responsible Levy will enable the NHS to offer more appointments, checks, scans and operations and reform the way services are delivered so the NHS is fit for the future, rather than simply plugging the gaps.

Backed by the Levy, five local authorities in England have already been announced to implement a new and improved adult social care charging reform system which caps the cost of care. To ensure a smooth transition from the current charging system the five trailblazing local authorities – Wolverhampton, Blackpool, Cheshire East, Newham, North Yorkshire – will put the charging reform plans in place in January 2023 ahead of a national rollout in October next year. The trailblazing areas were selected to ensure a cross section of communities are represented and so any insight, evidence and lessons learned from this initiative will be useful to providers and authorities in all parts of England.

The Levy will initially be based on National Insurance contributions (NICs) and from 2023 will be legislatively separate.

Every individual will contribute according to their means. Those who earn more pay more, with the highest 15 per cent of people paying over half the revenues.

Low earners will be shielded from the levy following action taken by the Chancellor in the Spring Statement last month. From July, the level at which people pay National Insurance on their income will rise to £12,570, saving a typical employee over £330 a year. The change does not affect the funding available to Health and Social Care.

Recognising this year will be tough on household budgets, a £9.1 billion

package will see most households receive £350 to help with rising energy bills, including a £150 cash grant via the Council Tax system in April, and a £200 reduction in energy bills in October with the cost smoothed over 5 years.

[We will not rest until Putin fails and Ukraine prevails: Foreign Secretary's speech in Warsaw](#)

Welcome to the British Embassy in Warsaw. It's good to have the opportunity to hear from my friend and colleague Dmytro Kuleba, the Ukrainian Foreign Minister at what is an extremely difficult time.

What we have seen on the streets of Irpin and Bucha are scenes that we will never forget. We have seen butchery, evidence of rape and sexual violence as well as the indiscriminate killing of civilians.

We will ensure that the perpetrators are brought to justice for these barbaric crimes. And together with our allies we will step up our efforts to stop Putin's appalling war.

Three weeks ago, the UK led 41 states to refer these atrocities to the International Criminal court. We are [providing additional funding to the ICC](#).

The UK military and police are providing technical assistance to the investigations. And the Metropolitan Police War Crimes unit have commenced the collection of evidence. We are working very closely with the Ukrainian government on this.

We have appointed former ICC judge Sir Howard Morrison as an independent adviser to the Ukrainian prosecutor general.

And today, I can announce that we are launching a £10 million civil society fund to support organisations in Ukraine, including those helping the victims of conflict-related sexual violence.

We will not rest until these criminals have been brought to justice.

We are clear that after these appalling crimes Russia has no place on the Human Rights Council.

And it is the responsibility of the UK and our allies – and that is what Dymtro and I discussed today – to step up our support for our brave Ukrainian friends. That means more weapons and more sanctions. Putin must lose in Ukraine.

Later this week, the G7 Foreign Ministers and the NATO Foreign Ministers will meet.

We need to announce a tough new wave of sanctions. The reality is that money is still flowing from the West into Putin's war machine, and that has to stop.

In Brussels, I'll be working with our partners to go further as has been advocated by Dmytro in banning Russian ships from our ports, in cracking down on Russian banks, in going after new industries filling Putin's war chest like gold, and agreeing a clear timetable to eliminate our imports of Russian oil, gas and coal.

We also need even more weapons of the type the Ukrainians are asking for.

The UK is supplying more including next-generation light anti-tank weapons, Javelin Missiles and Starstreak anti-aircraft systems. And last week, we [hosted a donor conference with our allies](#) to secure more.

The fact is that being tough is the only approach that will work. Putin has escalated this war.

And this approach is vital to ensuring he loses in Ukraine, and that we see a full withdrawal of Russian troops and Ukraine's hand is strengthened at the negotiating table.

There should be no talk of removing sanctions whilst Putin's troops are in Ukraine and the threat of Russian aggression looms over Europe.

We need to see Putin withdraw his troops. We need to see Ukraine's full territorial integrity restored. We need to see Russia's ability for further aggression stopped. We need a plan to rebuild Ukraine. And we need to see justice done at the International Criminal Court.

Dmytro – we salute your bravery and the bravery of the Ukrainian people.

We are determined to help in whatever way we can. We will back you unwaveringly in your negotiations.

And together, we will not rest until Putin fails and Ukraine prevails.

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[Civil news: changes to the specialist quality mark standard](#)

News story

We are making changes to the Specialist Quality Mark standard from 1 October 2022.



Updates are being made to the Specialist Quality Mark (SQM) standard which will be coming into force on 1 October 2022.

The new SQM standard will apply to all applications for a desktop audit and requests for a full audit made after 1 October.

We are making these changes following a review and the details are set out on our quality standards page on GOV.UK.

What is the SQM standard?

The SQM is a quality assurance standard owned by the Legal Aid Agency. It is designed to ensure providers:

It is a requirement for legal aid contract holders to hold either the SQM or the Law Society's equivalent 'Lexcel' accreditation.

Further information

[Legal Aid Agency quality standards](#) – to download guidance

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