

# 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.

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## **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.

Published 14 March 2022

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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.

Published 14 March 2022

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## [All COVID-19 travel restrictions removed in the UK](#)

- from 4am 18 March no-one entering the UK will need to take tests or complete a passenger locator form
- remaining managed hotel quarantine capacity will be fully stood down from the end of March, making the UK one of the first major economies to end all COVID-19 international travel rules
- contingency plans put in place to manage any future variants of concern (VoCs)

The government will remove the remaining restrictions on international travel for all passengers ahead of the Easter holidays, the Transport Secretary announced today (14 March 2022).

As one of the first major economies to remove all its remaining COVID-19 travel restrictions, this is a landmark moment for passengers and the travel and aviation sector.

From 4am Friday 18 March, all COVID-19 travel restrictions will be lifted, including the [passenger locator form](#) (PLF) for arrivals into UK, as well as all tests for passengers who do not qualify as vaccinated. This change, therefore, removes the need for unvaccinated passengers to take a [pre-departure test](#) and a [day 2 post arrival test](#).

This step reflects the decisions taken by the government, as set out in the [Living with COVID plan](#), and the success of the UK's vaccine and booster rollout, with 86% of the population having received a second dose and 67% of the population with a booster or third dose.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

The UK is leading the world in removing all remaining COVID-19 travel restrictions, and today's announcement is a testament to the hard work everyone in this country has put in place to roll out the vaccine and protect each other.

I said we wouldn't keep travel measures in place for any longer than necessary, which we're delivering on today – providing more welcome news and greater freedom for travellers ahead of the Easter holidays.

I look forward to continuing to work with the travel sector and partners around the world to keep international travel moving.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

As we learn to live with COVID-19, we're taking further steps to open up international travel once again ahead of the Easter holidays.

We will continue monitoring and tracking potential new variants and keep a reserve of measures that can be rapidly deployed if needed to keep us safe.

We can remove these final restrictions thanks to the incredible success of our vaccination programme, which has seen more than 8 out of 10 adults across the UK boosted.

To ensure the protection of public health, the government will maintain a range of contingency measures in reserve, which would enable it to take swift and proportionate action to delay any future harmful variants of COVID-19 entering the UK should the need arise.

In future, the government's default approach will be to use the least stringent measures, if appropriate, to minimise the impact on travel as far as possible – given the high personal, economic and international costs border measures can have – and the contingency measures will only be implemented in extreme circumstances.

Given the current state of the pandemic and a move towards global travel volumes returning to normal, the remaining managed hotel quarantine capacity will be fully stood down from the end of March.

Tim Alderslade, Chief Executive of Airlines UK, said:

Today's announcement sends a clear message to the world – the UK travel sector is back. With travellers returning to the UK no longer burdened by unnecessary forms and testing requirements, we can now look forward to the return to pre-COVID normality throughout the travel experience.

We're grateful for the timing of the announcement as we prepare to welcome back passengers this Easter and summer, for which we know there is huge pent-up demand, and for the UK's leadership in being the first major aviation market to remove all remaining restrictions. The time to return to the skies – to enjoy all that makes aviation and international travel great, for families and businesses – is now.

Karen Dee, Chief Executive of Airport Operators Association, said:

A return to restriction-free travel is good news for passengers and should allow for aviation to take significant steps towards recovery. People should feel encouraged to book their long-awaited holidays, trips to see relatives and friends abroad they haven't seen for a long time and travel to rekindle business ties with other countries.

Steve Heapy, CEO of Jet2.com and Jet2holidays, said:

Two years after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, today's announcement marks international travel finally returning to normal. The removal of passenger locator forms and testing regimes means that customers can at long last enjoy hassle-free travel, just like they did before the pandemic.

With Easter just around the corner and summer fast approaching, this announcement comes at the perfect time. Since restrictions started to be eased at the beginning of the year, we have experienced strong, sustained demand and the complete removal of forms and requirements will boost that demand even further.

Additionally, UKHSA will continue to closely monitor the prevalence and spread of harmful variants and keep international data under review.

While there will be no border health measures on arrival in the UK from 18 March, other countries are at different stages in the pandemic and many still require passengers to comply with requirements.

Travellers should continue to check GOV.UK travel guidance including Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) [travel advice](#) to keep up to date with other countries' entry requirements.

Passengers are also encouraged to carefully check booking conditions for flexibility in amending bookings prior to buying tickets. People will continue to be able to access their vaccine and recovery records through the [NHS COVID Pass](#) to use when travelling overseas.

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## [Armed Forces celebrate global partnerships on Commonwealth Day 2022](#)

News story

Armed forces personnel took part in events to mark Commonwealth Day with a commemoration at the Memorial Gates and a service at Westminster Abbey.



Defence Minister Jeremy Quin attended the Commonwealth Memorial Gates service in London. 14 March 2022.

The Band of the Coldstream Guards and a Piper from 1st Battalion Scots Guards provided music for the service at the Commonwealth Memorial Gates service, while the State Trumpeters of The Band of the Household Cavalry and Fanfare Trumpeters from the Band of the Welsh Guards performed at The Commonwealth Service at Westminster Abbey.

The Band of the Scots Guards with the Commonwealth Youth Orchestra and Choir perform at Horse Guards Parade, 14 March 2022. Crown Copyright.

Defence Minister Jeremy Quin laid a wreath on behalf of the Ministry of Defence at the Commonwealth Memorial Gates. Senior Armed Forces officers from commonwealth nations attended the service.

On Horse Guards Parade, the Commonwealth Youth Orchestra and Choir performed alongside The Band of the Scots Guards.

Commonwealth representatives prepare to lay wreaths at the Memorial Gates service in London on Commonwealth Day, 14 March 2022. Crown Copyright.

The theme of Commonwealth Day 2022 is 'Delivering A Common Future', celebrating the commonwealth countries' united efforts to achieve common goals, including protecting natural resources, boosting trade, and delivering a peaceful, prosperous, and more sustainable future.

The UK armed forces have made notable high-profile contributions to these efforts throughout recent months:

- **Australia:** The UK, Australia and the US announced a landmark defence and security partnership to protect and defend our shared interests in the Indo-Pacific.
- **Tonga:** Royal Navy ship HMS Spey delivered vital humanitarian aid to Tonga, in addition to UK-funded supplies onboard the Royal Australian Navy's HMAS Adelaide following the catastrophic tsunami that hit the islands.
- **Kenya:** The UK Armed Forces took part in a joint exercise with the Kenyan Defence Forces where troops rehearsed warfare in a demanding terrain.
- **Zambia:** British Army personnel deployed last summer to train local rangers to prevent the poaching of precious wildlife.
- **Cyprus:** The UK supports UN operations on the island and provides search and rescue support to local emergency services.
- **Nigeria:** The UK and Nigeria have signed a deal to work even more closely on defence and security, with the UK providing training to the Nigerian Armed Forces.
- **Barbados:** Royal Navy ship RAF Wave Knight and a Wildcat helicopter



joined HMS Medway in Barbados to share aid for those affected by the volcanic eruption in St Vincent.

- **Jamaica:** British-Jamaican RAF gunner Lance Corporal Shanwayne Stephens competed for Team Jamaica at the 2022 Winter Olympics.

Given that 2022 is Her Majesty's Jubilee year, there was also a special focus on the role that service plays in the lives of people and communities across the commonwealth.

Published 14 March 2022