

Civil/crime news: tender opens for Specialist Quality Mark work

News story

Bids welcome for new contract to administer auditing services for the Specialist Quality Mark (SQM).



A tender opens on 27 January 2022 to deliver auditing services for the Specialist Quality Mark.

The tender is open to any interested party that can meet the minimum tender requirements. We are seeking to award one contract for the delivery of this work across England and Wales.

We are also updating the SQM standard and SQM guidance. These changes will come into effect on 1 October 2022.

Timescales

- tender opens on 27 January 2022
- deadline for submitting tenders is 5pm on 10 March 2022
- services under the new contract will begin on 1 October 2022

What is the SQM?

The SQM is the organisational quality standard owned by the LAA. It is designed to ensure providers of legal services:

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

Where can I find out more?

Detailed information on the tender is available in the 'Information for Applicants' document on our tender pages.

Information on the updates to the SQM standard and SQM guidance can be found on the 'Legal Aid Agency quality standards' page on our website.

Further information

[Specialist quality mark service from October 2022](#) – to download 'Information for Applicants' document

[Legal Aid Agency quality standards](#)

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Rise in extremely drug-resistant Shigella in gay and bisexual men

Surveillance by UKHSA has detected a rise in cases of extremely antibiotic-resistant *Shigella sonnei* infections, mainly in gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (MSM).

There have been 47 cases in the 4-month period between 1 September 2021 and 10 January 2022. This compares to 16 cases in a 17-month period the previous year – between 1 April 2020 and 31 August 2021. UKHSA has been following this strain since 2018, but recent cases show resistance to antibiotics is increasing.

Shigella is a gut infection that causes diarrhoea (sometimes mixed with blood), stomach cramps and fever. It is caused by bacteria found in faeces. Sex that may involve anal contact or contact with faeces is one way that the infection can spread. It is passed on through the faecal-oral route during sex, either directly or via unwashed hands and only a tiny amount of bacteria can spread the infection.

Symptoms are typically seen between 1 and 4 days after exposure and are commonly mistaken for food poisoning.

Shigella is very infectious. Although symptoms can be unpleasant, in most cases they will subside within a week, but some individuals need hospitalisation and require intravenous antibiotic treatment. Effective antibiotic treatments are limited for this extremely resistant strain.

Dr Gauri Godbole, Consultant Medical Microbiologist at UKHSA, said:

Practising good hygiene after sex is really important to keep you and your partners safe. Avoid oral sex immediately after anal sex, and change condoms between anal or oral sex and wash your hands with soap after sexual contact.

It's important that gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men do not dismiss their symptoms and speak to their GP or sexual health clinic, mentioning Shigella, if they are unwell.

Men with Shigella may have been exposed to other STIs including HIV, so a sexual health screen at a clinic or ordering tests online is recommended.

If you have been diagnosed with Shigella, give yourself time to recover. Keep hydrated and get lots of rest.

Don't have sex until 7 days after your last symptom and avoid spas, swimming, jacuzzis, hot tubs and sharing towels as well as preparing food for other people until a week after symptoms stop.

You can find out more information about Shigella and get advice on other topics at [Sexwise](#) or by calling the free National Sexual Health Helpline at 0300 123 7123.

UK TO MAKE ALL ITS HOLOCAUST RECORDS ACCESSIBLE FOR RESEARCH AND STUDY

The UK government is to make all its records related to the Holocaust available to the public for the first time, for research and study purposes, it announced today (January 27) to mark Holocaust Memorial Day.

This includes the collection of 787 books in the St. Lambrecht collection, once looted by the Nazis, which will be accessible to the public for the first time.

The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) plans to move them to London's Wiener Holocaust Library, subject to legal agreement.

In addition, the governments of Guernsey and Jersey have committed to making their Holocaust records publicly available as well.

The UK Government is now urging others, throughout the world, in possession of collections of Holocaust-related material/records to adopt a similar

approach.

In an age where some deny or distort the Holocaust it is important to make documents of the era as freely available as possible.

Lord Pickles, Prime Minister's Special Envoy for post-Holocaust issues said:

I am grateful for the full and friendly cooperation of the governments of Guernsey and Jersey. I also thank the diligence of the FCDO staff for their recent work on the St. Lambrecht historic book collection. There can be no better place to keep the collection than the Wiener Holocaust Library.

Lord Ahmad, FCDO Minister for Human Rights said:

The FCDO is working to release any Holocaust-related material it may hold and to make that public. We are committed to the continued review of our holdings, including those held by our Embassies overseas, and working with other government departments where relevant.

Chief Minister of Jersey John Le Fondré said:

A large amount of work has been undertaken by Jersey Archive to collate, digitalise and display the records that it holds related to the Holocaust and more broadly the German occupation of Jersey. Jersey is committed to transparency and to ensuring that our records from this dark period are available and accessible to all.

Chief Minister of Guernsey, Peter Ferbraché said:

Guernsey is committed to ensuring that the records it holds related to the Holocaust, and more generally the Nazi Occupation of the island, are accessible. A substantial amount of work has already been undertaken over the years to collate and index the records held by the States of Guernsey on this matter, and the Island Archives, where the majority of these records are held, continually works on improving ease of access.

Director of the Wiener Holocaust Library, Dr. Toby Simpson said:

The Wiener Library is proud of its long history of throwing light on the darkest chapters of history, and on the Holocaust in particular. It is crucial to ensure that the past is not ignored or locked away, but confronted and used as a tool for building a

better future. We applaud the British government's recent efforts to improve access to vital records, and look forward to future cooperation.

Notes to Editors:

- The St. Lambrecht historic book collection comprises 787 published works dating from the late 16th century up to 1943. The following languages are represented; Czech, Latin, Hebrew, Italian, German, Hungarian, Russian, Romanian, English, Greek, French, Polish. The subject matter includes history, law, theology and scientific or pseudo-scientific topics, such as anatomy, alchemy and pyrotechnics. The collection had been hidden in St Lambrecht Abbey in Austria, where it was discovered by the Allied Commission for Austria (British Element) in September 1945 and sent back to the UK.
- To mark Holocaust Memorial Day [27 January], the FCD0 will be lighting up its buildings in purple.
- The Wiener Holocaust Library is one of the world's leading and most extensive archives on the Holocaust, the Nazi era and genocide.
- As a founding member of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), the UK is committed to the tenets of the 2000 Stockholm Declaration and the 2020 IHRA Ministerial Declaration.
- The Foreign Secretary Liz Truss virtually attended the October 2021 Malmö International Forum on Holocaust Remembrance and Combating Antisemitism on behalf of the UK. During the forum, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance pledged to develop recommendations on identifying Holocaust-related materials, so that victims, survivors, and their descendants can reclaim their histories and their identities.

[94% of secondary schools provide free period products to students](#)

New data on the government's free period product scheme shows schools and colleges stepping up to make sure no student has to miss lessons because of their period.

The data published today (Thursday 27 January) shows the value of products being ordered increased by almost a quarter (23%) in 2021 to £3.4 million compared with £2.8 million in 2020.

The number of environmentally friendly or reusable products ordered increased from less than a third in 2020 (30%) to almost half (48%) of all products in 2021.

In total, 13,822 individual organisations (68% of all those eligible) have

ordered free period products since the scheme began in January 2020, helping reduce stigma around menstruation. This includes 94% of secondary schools and 90% of post 16 organisations.

The government is encouraging more primary schools to order products, with less than two thirds (61%) of primary schools currently engaging in the scheme.

The data also shows where take up across the country is especially strong, including the London borough of Redbridge which engaged the highest percentage of its schools and colleges in the scheme. Darlington has seen the biggest jump in uptake year on year.

Minister for Children and Families, Will Quince said:

I am pleased to see our free period products in such high demand in schools and colleges across the country, making sure there is no reason for any student to miss lessons or worry about coming on their period.

We strongly encourage everyone to make the most of this scheme – demand should be no different from Stockport and Slough, to Manchester and Middlesbrough.

I encourage every school and college to check their stocks and continue to order products before the end of the academic year. It is the quickest and simplest way of making sure they are available to everyone who needs them.

The locations topping the charts for engagement in the scheme are*:

Percentage of eligible schools and colleges making at least one order since January 2020	Percentage increase of schools and colleges making at least one order in 2021 compared with 2020
London Borough of Redbridge (91%)	Darlington (58% up from 26%)
Leicestershire and Luton (88%; joint)	Runcorn and Widnes (Halton) (60% up from 34%)
Leicester and Slough (85%; joint)	Hartlepool (48% up from 28%)
	Warrington (55% up from 38%)
	Torbay (59% up from 41%)

The most ordered products are*:

	2020	2020	2021	2021
Type of product	Number of packets ordered	Percentage of all packets ordered	Number of packets ordered	Percentage of all packets ordered
Pads	458,023	66%	615,064	75%
Tampons	221,656	32%	179,723	22%

Menstrual cups	9,477	1%	22,619	3%
Standard Type	483,551	70%	423,331	52%
Eco friendly/reusable	205,605	30%	394,075	48%

Chris Brown, head of public sector at phs, said:

The success of this partnership means that thousands of learners across England are able to access the period products to which they're entitled. Period products are a necessity, not a luxury, and providing access to these products through schools doesn't just increase the days learners can be in the classroom, it alleviates stress, increases dignity and protects their health and wellbeing.

We are proud to be a part of this movement, but recognise we have a way to go to ensure that all learners are aware of the availability of period products across both primary and secondary schools. We will continue to work to increase awareness of this important topic, working with educators and young people to uphold our commitment to creating period equality for everyone.

The free period product scheme is for all young people in English state schools and 16-19 organisations, providing products to those who need them, including students who cannot afford products, have forgotten them, or come on their period unexpectedly.

The programme is supplied by phs Direct, part of phs Group and has been designed so schools and colleges can easily order the quantity and type of free products they need, with no delivery charge. The scheme has been extended until July 2022 as part of the Government's drive to end period poverty and support disadvantaged pupils.

The government is expected to announce plans in the coming weeks for the future of the scheme from academic year 2022/23.

[Secretary of State speech at the RENEW summit](#)

Hi everyone, and welcome to RENEW!

I'm absolutely delighted to be part of this event – and I'm sorry I couldn't be there in person.

I know that last year's inaugural RESET conference was a huge success, so

it's great to be back together again.

And thankfully, I think we're in a much brighter spot compared to this time last year.

Our path out of the pandemic was never going to be completely smooth. There have been various bumps along the way – including the latest Omicron variant.

But I think gradually, step by step, we're putting COVID in the rearview mirror and entering our long-term recovery from this pandemic.

We've got one of the most open and fastest-growing economies, and we can start looking to the future with confidence.

So I think this is the perfect opportunity to step back, and think about the longer-term priorities for the advertising industry over the next decade and beyond

As everyone in this room will know, the advertising industry is incredibly important to our national life – economically, socially, culturally.

It pumps over £17 billion into our economy – and I'm so glad to see that the industry has made a remarkable comeback from COVID.

Ad spend is expected to rise to a new high of £26.7 billion this year, which is brilliant.

Advertising is also the backbone of our creative industries – which, more and more, are one of our strongest sources of global power.

Forget the industries of the past; it's our writers and directors and musicians and creative technicians who are celebrated abroad...

...who power our exports...

who put the UK firmly at the centre of the world stage.

While Adele and Ed Sheeran are collecting their Grammys, you were all scooping up awards at the Cannes Lions.

But it's not just culturally. Advertising is hugely important socially, too.

Once again we saw it with the booster campaign – which, more than anything else, has put us on such a strong footing to bounce back from Covid.

Much of that was thanks to the inventiveness of your campaigns, and your dedication to the cause – and I know countless publishers gave up space for free to help us promote our mission.

Messaging was beamed out from the BT Tower and stamped onto letters. Footballers and actors were recruited to spread the word.

And it worked. Together, we managed to get 30 million people boosted in a matter of weeks, at a time when it was most needed.

It's an incredible achievement, and I think when we look back, it'll be a potent symbol of advertising's power.

And that's why I'm so pleased to see the sector using its influence to drive change in lots of other areas – including diversity and inclusion, and climate change.

Your “All-In Census” was the largest survey of its kind for any UK industry, and has since been copied around the world.

“Ad Net Zero” has driven the global conversation in the industry about climate action.

I'm looking forward to seeing how the next generation of ad talent plans to use their creativity for good causes, and I'll be supporting them wherever I can.

However, the sector still faces some challenges, and I'd like to take this opportunity, in front of all of you today, to talk about one in particular.

Today, up to 70 percent of people don't trust what they see online.

Part of that is due to bad actors exploiting vulnerable people online – whether it's by spreading dangerous disinformation like anti-vaxx messaging, or committing online fraud.

It's hard to overstate how awful online fraud is. It causes a great deal of suffering, both economically and psychologically.

And it really damages public trust in online content.

Given how much advertising now occurs on the internet, that should trouble everyone in the industry.

And it's on all of us to tackle this problem.

The Advertising Association has been doing its own work to rebuild that public trust, and I know the IAB's Gold Standard is helping to raise standards and improve brand safety across the industry.

But if we want UK advertising to keep its stellar reputation, we've got to make sure we have a market that is safe for businesses to invest in, and that is safe for consumers.

For 60 years now, the Advertising Standards Authority has regulated advertising across the UK – and they've taken a really proactive approach to protecting consumers throughout those six decades.

I know they're developing their own Online Platform and Network Standards, and over the coming months we'll be watching closely as they continue with that project.

But we're looking to go further as a government.

It's time for us to deliver meaningful change: change that recognises how much the internet has transformed advertising over the last few decades...

...but also how advertising has become the bed-rock for the internet, funding so many of the services people now enjoy and couldn't imagine life without.

That's why I'm pleased to confirm that we will be consulting on the Online Advertising Programme in Spring, and that we'll use that consultation to review the entire regulatory framework of online advertising – including the content, placement and targeting of those ads.

We'll use the Online Advertising Programme to tackle lack of transparency.

Right now, the online supply chain is too opaque.

It's a complex, often automated system where highly personalised ads are delivered at speed and at scale.

Harm can be made worse by the fact that ads can be targeted towards specific audiences, such as children or vulnerable groups.

We want to get under the bonnet and shine a light on these issues.

And we want to ensure today's ad world is as accountable as yesterday's.

We've got robust regulation for adverts on traditional media, like TV. It's time to ensure there are robust rules for the online sphere, too.

We want to focus in particular on the role of online platforms and intermediaries – at how they disseminate advertising online, and how they can take greater responsibility for this role.

And in general, we want to empower regulators to take action on trickier issues before they come to government – reducing the need for us to get involved.

That way, we should see fewer government interventions – like what we're currently seeing on content that's high in fat, sugar or salt.

I know bans like that can be challenging for the industry, and can have an effect on the wider economy.

That's why we want to make meaningful, holistic changes – and we're considering a range of approaches to do so.

Some might be voluntary. Others may involve more oversight, where we think it's necessary.

But it's crucial we all work together on this challenge.

I want to hear the views of everyone in this room: on what already works, what needs to improve, and how we can update the rulebook without damaging innovation.

We don't want to over-engineer this. But we do want to be better at protecting people online.

That's a personal mission of mine while I'm at DCMS – and all of this ties into the work we're doing on the Online Safety Bill, which we'll be introducing to Parliament later this Spring.

And I want to thank everyone here today and across the industry for your work on both that Bill, and on the Online Advertising Programme.

Both will help us make the UK the safest place in the world to go online.

That will be good for users, and it'll be good for advertisers, too.

In the meantime, have a great conference – and I look forward to working with you all in the coming months to protect one of our most competitive and most creative industries.

Thank you!