

New courtroom protections for victims of rape piloted in London and North East

- pilot to spare victims of rape and sexual violence the stress of being cross-examined extended to Crown Courts in the capital and Durham
- this can reduce trauma for victims and witnesses, meaning they can give better evidence
- ministers deliver on Rape Review pledge to roll out scheme further

The measure allows intimidated victims and witnesses of crimes such as rape and modern slavery to have their cross-examination video recorded and played during the trial.

The move delivers on a key pledge in the Government's Rape Review to extend this provision further and bolster support for victims. It will be made available immediately from today in three Crown Courts in London (Harrow, Isleworth, and Wood Green), as well as Durham Crown Court.

The recording takes place as close to the time of the offence as possible in order to help memory recall and reduce the stress of giving evidence in a courtroom setting, which many find traumatic. It is already in place in Liverpool, Leeds and Kingston-Upon-Thames Crown Courts, and could be introduced at others across the country subject to further evaluation.

Today's extension follows the successful rollout of the provision for vulnerable victims, such as children or those who suffer from a debilitating condition, to all Crown Courts in England and Wales last year – with more than 1,500 witnesses having already benefitted from the technology.

Deputy Prime Minister, Lord Chancellor, and Secretary of State for Justice, Dominic Raab said:

Boosting support for victims is one of my top priorities so I'm keen that we use this technology to minimise stress for victims and ensure they can provide their best evidence.

This is part of our plans to transform the response to crimes against women, better support victims and make sure cases are investigated fully and prosecuted robustly.

Rachel Nicholas, Victim Support's Head of Service in London, said:

We welcome the measures announced by the government to improve the court process for victims of abuse in London, especially at a time when the number of survivors of domestic abuse accessing Victim

Support's specialist, community-based services has reached peak levels.

For a lot of victims, survivors and witnesses, giving evidence in court is a traumatic experience. It's crucial that they know their rights under the Victims' Code to apply for special measures to help further reduce the stress of attending court and move on with their lives. Rolling out this scheme more widely is a welcome step in the right direction.

The measure is also designed to maintain a defendant's right to a fair trial and any decision to pre-record evidence is made by a judge on a case-by case basis.

The expansion of the pilot is a key part of the Government's Rape Review which sets out clear actions for the police, prosecutors and courts. These include a new approach to investigations, reducing the number of victims withdrawing from the process, increasing the volume of trials being heard, protecting the public and putting more rapists behind bars.

It follows wider efforts to improve the support on offer to victims at every stage of the criminal justice system. In the past year alone, £300 million has been invested in vital support services, alongside £27million to fund hundreds more independent domestic violence and sexual violence advisors.

Meanwhile, new legislation will put in statute the support that victims should receive from criminal justice agencies for the first time, and will be consulted on in due course.

Notes to editors

- Both the defence and prosecution lawyers will be present in court during the pre-recording as will the judge and the defendant.
 - Pre-recording cross-examination preserves a defendant's right to a fair trial.
 - Between September 2020 and August 2021 there were more than 1,500 witnesses who have used the S.28 provision.
 - Vulnerable witnesses and victims are defined as all child witnesses under 18 and any witness whose quality of evidence is likely to be diminished because they are suffering from a mental disorder or physical disability or has significant impairment of intelligence and social functioning.
 - Intimidated witnesses and victims for the purposes of this pilot are defined as complainants or witnesses of sexual offences and modern slavery offences.
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Olympian, youth activist and 'clean champion' triplets picked as next 'One Step Greener' ambassadors one month ahead of crucial COP26 climate summit

- Seven more 'One Step Greener' Ambassadors have been selected ahead of COP26 Summit in November, with the search on for six more
- The newly announced Ambassadors including Melissa Wilson (GB rower), Siobhan McKenna (ReJean Denim) and Cathy Yitong Li (youth activist) will form part of the final 26 'One Step Greener' Ambassadors
- These UK citizens and businesses are inspiring and calling on people to take greener steps for the environment

The British public has selected a further seven 'One Step Greener' Ambassadors from across the UK who are going above and beyond to tackle climate change. They will join the existing 13 Ambassadors, inspiring the public to go one step greener and having their stories showcased at COP26.

GB rower Melissa Wilson decided to do something to increase the impact that athletes can have on sustainability and tackling climate change and joined Champions for Earth in 2020. Melissa instigated the elite sport and sustainability initiative OLY Earth+, working with Team GB to create a green legacy for their participation in the Tokyo Olympics.

Eight-year-old triplets, and Nottingham Council's first children clean champions, Waimi, Mbetmi and Yimi Fongue heard about climate change at school and wanted to do more to help. The inspiring triplets are on a mission to protect the environment and were just six years old when they made headlines for their litter picking efforts.

COP26 President-Designate Alok Sharma said:

In just under a month, the UK will host the crucial UN climate change conference COP26 in Glasgow to bring countries together to commit to urgent global climate action. We are leading the way in the UK – as we become pioneers in new clean technologies, we create thousands of good jobs, clean investment in local communities, and a brighter future for generations to come.

There are also thousands of communities across the country doing their bit too. So in the lead up to COP26, we are celebrating the steps people across the UK are already taking and our One Step Greener Ambassadors are leading the charge by inspiring and encouraging the nation to join in.

Maria Antonietta Nestor launched A Toy's Life and Beyond to educate parents

and families on the recyclability of toys and what to do with them once they are broken, not fit for purpose or no longer wanted by their owners. Maria said:

I have made it my mission to help tackle climate change through reducing plastic waste. I am proud to be playing a part in helping create a better world for my children and future generations. There are so many ways we can make a difference and go One Step Greener and I encourage everyone to play their part ahead of COP26.

The other four Ambassadors announced today include Cathy Yitong Li (youth activist), Siobhan McKenna (founder of ethical fashion brand ReJean Denim), Clare Every (vegan food blogger) and Aamir Khan (eco conscious business owner).

The 'One Step Greener' Ambassadors are continuing the nationwide search for the remaining six who will represent their country and have their stories showcased at COP26 – which aims to be the most inclusive COP ever.

The nation can nominate themselves or people in their communities who they think are making a big difference in the fight against climate change. Those nominated could be family members, friends, colleagues, community leaders or entrepreneurs: anyone who is taking action to tackle climate change and inspiring others to follow in their green footsteps. Nominate by visiting [here](#).

The full list of 'One Step Greener' Ambassadors from across Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England includes Aamir Khan (eco-conscious business owner), Maria Antonieta Nestor (A Toy's Life and Beyond), Melissa Wilson (GB rower), Clare Every (vegan food blogger), Waimi, Mbetmi and Yimi Fongue (clean champions), Siobhan McKenna (ReJean Denim), Cathy Yitong Li (youth activist), Dame Jackie Daniel (NHS), Alice Powell (Envision Virgin Racing), Hugo Chambers (Sainsbury's), Jasmine Allen (SSE), Toby McCartney (MacRebur), Sara Thomson (The Leith Collective), James Lloyd-Jones (Jones Food Company), Emer Rafferty (youth environmentalist), Ade Adepitan (Paralympic medalist and TV presenter), Max La Manna (low-waste chef), Rob Thompson (Odyssey Innovation), Ash Dykes (adventurer and extreme athlete) and Buffy Boroughs (Green Gathering Festival).

Government launches £500m support for vulnerable households over winter

- £500m support available to help those most in need as we enter the final stages of recovery

- Money available to councils in October 2021
- Bolsters support already in place to help vulnerable households and individuals

Vulnerable households across the country will be able to access a new £500m support fund to help them with essentials over the coming months as the country continues its recovery from the pandemic.

The new Household Support Fund will support millions of households in England and will be distributed by councils in England, who know their local areas best and can directly help those who need it most, including for example, through small grants to meet daily needs such as food, clothing, and utilities. Cash will be made available to Local Authorities in October 2021.

The Barnett formula will apply in the usual way to additional funding in England. The devolved administrations will therefore receive up to £79m of the £500m.

With more people in work and the economy bouncing back, the Government is focused on investing in jobs and skills – increasing prospects and wages across the country – whilst ensuring those in greatest need can access vital support to help cover every day costs. Alongside this, the government's Plan for Jobs is helping people move back into employment so they can earn a regular wage, progress and increase their financial resilience.

Families will also continue to benefit from the energy price cap, recent rise in Local Housing Allowance and increases in the National Living Wage.

Thérèse Coffey, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, said:

Over the last year, we have helped millions of people provide for their families. Many are now back on their feet but we know that some may still need further support. Our targeted Household Support Fund is here to help those vulnerable households with essential costs as we push through the last stages of our recovery from the pandemic.

Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak said:

Everyone should be able to afford the essentials, and we are committed to ensuring that is the case.

Our new Household Support Fund will provide a lifeline for those at risk of struggling to keep up with their bills over the winter, adding to the support the government is already providing to help people with the cost of living.

The UK Government has kept its Covid-related economic support in place until

September, helping people through the toughest stages of the pandemic and well beyond the end of the roadmap, with more generous timelines than other countries in Europe.

This new fund will run over winter and those in need of support should contact their local council who will help them access the fund.

This fund bolsters support from the Warm Home Discount which provides a £140 rebate on energy bills each winter to over 2.2 million low-income households and the Cold Weather Payment which provides £25 extra a week for poorer households when the temperature is consistently below zero.

Earlier this year the government expanded the £221m Holiday Activities and Food programme, which has offered nutritious meals and enriching activities to disadvantaged children across the Easter and Summer holidays, and will do so again this Christmas.

And to further support families with children, the Government has doubled free childcare for eligible working parents, worth up to £5,000 per child every year and increased the value of Healthy Start vouchers in April by over a third, helping disadvantaged women who are pregnant or have children under four to purchase fresh fruit and vegetables, boosting the long-term health of their children.

As the Barnett formula will apply in the usual way to additional funding in England, the devolved administrations will receive up to £79m of the £500m (£41m for the Scottish Government, £25m for the Welsh Government and £14m for the NI Executive). It will be for the devolved administrations to decide how to allocate this additional funding.

[Adaptations in 2022 summer exams to ensure fairness for students](#)

GCSE, AS and A level exams in England next summer will be adapted to maximise fairness and help students reach their potential.

Following a public consultation, the government and Ofqual have today (30 September) confirmed changes such as a choice of topics in some GCSE exams like English literature and history; advance information on the focus of exams to focus students' revision in subjects, where there is not a choice of topics; and support materials like formulae sheets in maths.

These plans recognise the disruption caused to this year group's education as a result of the pandemic, while balancing the need to return to exams as the fairest possible form of assessment. With exams set to return, Ofqual has also set out its approach to grading, following the last two years which saw

an overall higher proportion of students receiving top grades compared to pre-pandemic years.

Next year will be a transition year to reflect the recovery period, with grade boundaries to be set by exam boards reflecting a midway point between 2021 and 2019 – so that more students get higher grades in 2022 than before the pandemic. This approach will provide a safety net for this year's students as well as a step back to normality, with results expected to return to the usual grade profile by 2023.

Education Secretary Nadhim Zahawi said:

We've put fairness at the heart of our approach and listened to pupils, teachers and parents. The measures we're putting in place will help reduce the impact of the significant disruption this group of young people have had to face – allowing them to move onto the next stage of their lives.

We are committed to rigorous standards being fairly applied, and exams are the fairest way to assess students, which is why they will take place next year.

The return to exams means teachers will be able to focus on teaching and helping students catch up on their learning, while adaptations ensure fairness for students and help them to focus their revision.

The consultation gathered more than 6,000 responses – with almost a quarter from students – and showed that more than 90 per cent of students and parents were in favour of giving advance information and around 80 per cent or more agreed with offering choices of topics.

It is the government's firm intention that exams will take place next year, as the fairest way for students to show what they know and can do. But the government and Ofqual have also published proposals for Teacher Assessed Grades as a contingency measure if exams cannot go ahead, in the event that the course or impact of the pandemic changes.

Alongside this, the department has set out how these arrangements will apply to vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs).

Ofqual Chief Regulator, Dr Jo Saxton, said:

The interests of learners are central to Ofqual's mandate. For us, that means fairness. It means qualifications that stand the test of time, that employers, colleges and universities can trust.

Our grading approach will recognise the disruption experienced by students taking exams in 2022. It will provide a safety net for those who might otherwise just miss out on a higher grade, while taking a step back to normal.

Exams and other formal assessments are the best and fairest means of assessing students' achievements. Choice in some subjects and advance information to support revision are intended to provide support for all as we emerge from the pandemic. Advance information to help students focus their revision over the final months will be given for summer exams in early February and the timing will be kept under review subject to the course of the pandemic.

Results for exams next year will return to their normal format, with AS and A levels being released on 18 August, and GCSEs on 25 August. VTQs used to progress in a similar way will be issued on or before the same days, and other VTQs results will continue to be issued throughout the year.

The Government has committed to an ambitious and long-term education recovery plan, including an investment to date of over £3bn, helping young people prepare for exams as well as supporting school-aged children across the country. This includes a significant expansion of the tutoring programme, to support children and young people to make up for learning lost during the pandemic.

[DfE guidance on vocational contingencies published](#)

News story

Exams and other formal assessments will go ahead for vocational and technical qualifications and other general qualifications



Today the Department for Education (DfE) has published its [guidance on contingencies for vocational and technical qualifications \(VTQs\) and other general qualifications](#).

In July we jointly consulted on [the arrangements for the assessment and awarding of VTQs and other general qualifications for the academic year 2021 to 2022](#). In the consultation, we explained that we had future-proofed our regulatory framework, the VTQ Contingency Regulatory Framework (VCRF), so that we could respond to a change in government policy if necessary.

We have retained the provisions in the VCRF which would enable awarding organisations to issue results based on alternative evidence, including teacher assessed grades (TAGs), should that become necessary. These provisions are not currently needed as exams and other formal assessments are able to go ahead. If the government decided that it was not viable for exams and other formal assessments to take place at any point in the future because of COVID-19, we would be able to put these provisions back into effect quickly. We would do this through a consultation at that time.

We will continue to work with the DfE to monitor the impact of the pandemic on teaching, learning and assessment to review the arrangements we have put in place through the VCRF.

Building on the research we undertook this summer, we are also working with awarding organisations to review their approach to TAGs. This includes where it might be appropriate to implement the improvements proposed for GCSEs, AS and A levels, should it be necessary to introduce them in the future.

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