

# Civil news: Specialist Quality Mark contract from 1 October 2022

News story

New Specialist Quality Mark contract awarded to existing supplier Recognising Excellence which comes into force on 1 October 2022.



A new Specialist Quality Mark (SQM) contract begins on 1 October 2022 following a successful tender from Recognising Excellence, the existing supplier.

## **Has anything changed for providers?**

An early booking discount is being introduced for SQM holders who apply for reaccreditation early. We have also managed to reduce the cost of an audit for the majority of SQM holders and applicants.

These improvements were introduced through the tender by the Legal Aid Agency (LAA) as part of efforts to achieve better value for SQM holders and applicants.

For the most part, the terms of the SQM contract remain broadly the same.

Recognising Excellence will now continue to administer the SQM scheme on behalf of the LAA.

## **Standard and guidance updates**

Changes to the standard and guidance for the SQM also come into force on 1 October 2022. These apply to all requests for an SQM audit made after this date.

Advance notice of the changes was given in the early part of 2022. A summary can be found on our legal aid pages on GOV.UK.

## Further information

[Legal Aid Agency quality standards](#) – for changes to the standard and guidance for the SQM

[SQM – Recognising Excellence](#) – how to apply for the SQM through Recognising Excellence

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# Government support for energy bills begins for households and businesses

- The Energy Price Guarantee reduces household energy bills over the next two years, with a typical family paying around £2,500, saving £1,000 per year
- Businesses, charities and public sector organisations will pay less than half the expected prices this winter under the Energy Bill Relief Scheme from October
- Government energy support makes up the largest single component of the Growth Plan, protecting jobs and livelihoods and curbing inflation by 5 percentage points

Households, businesses and public sector organisations across the country will be protected from significant rises in energy bills, thanks to new government support taking effect from today (Saturday 1 October).

Without Government action, average household energy bills under the energy price cap had been due to rise to around £3,500 a year in October – a rise of 80% on current bills. Next year, they were estimated to increase even further to as high as £6,500.

From today, the Government's Energy Price Guarantee will limit the price households pay per unit of gas and electricity they use.

It means a typical household in Great Britain will pay around £2,500 per year, starting this month for the next two years – saving an average £1,000 a year on their energy bills.

Households will also see the first instalment of the £400 Energy Bill Support Scheme in their October electricity bill. The discount will be automatically applied monthly in six instalments between October 2022 and March 2023.

Thanks to the government's support, energy bills will now be close to where they've been for the past six months – and it will curb inflation by 5

percentage points, boosting economic growth, controlling the rising cost of goods, and reducing the cost of servicing the national debt.

This necessary intervention makes up the biggest proportion the Government's fiscal package set out in the Growth Plan.

Prime Minister Liz Truss said:

I know people across the country are anxious about their energy bills, which is why we have acted quickly to help them.

Livelihoods and businesses were at stake. The government's energy support limits the price they pay for gas and electricity, shields them from massive bill increases, and is expected to curb inflation too.

The cost of not acting would have been enormous. To make sure the British public is not left in this position again, we are also fixing the problem at its source by scaling up home-grown energy and reducing reliance on foreign supplies to boost our energy security and independence.

The UK Government is also urging people today to stay alert to scams and fraudulent messages. There is no need to apply for the schemes, with most customers receiving today's support automatically through their electricity bill.

Households in Northern Ireland will also receive the same support through the Energy Price Guarantee from November, with support for October bills backdated so they see the same benefit overall.

Those who might live in an area of the UK that is not served by the gas grid or use alternative fuels such as heating oil to heat their home will receive a £100 payment to support them with their energy bills.

Business and Energy Secretary Jacob Rees-Mogg said:

While Putin's weaponisation of energy has driven energy prices to record highs, we will not let his regime harm this country's businesses and households.

Unprecedented government support is beginning this weekend, protecting families and businesses across the country from what was going to be an 80% increase in energy bills this winter.

"I also urge people today to stay alert to scams. This support will reach people automatically and there is no need to apply."

British businesses have also been experiencing significant increases in energy costs, with some reports of more than 500%. Businesses, charities and

public sector organisations will also be protected through the Government's Energy Bill Relief Scheme from October over the next six months.

This support is equivalent to the Energy Price Guarantee put in place for households and similarly discounts price per unit of gas and electricity, meaning businesses and others will pay wholesale energy costs well below half of expected prices for this winter.

In parallel, the Government is also taking decisive steps to tackle the root cause of the issues in the UK energy market through boosting British energy supply and increasing independence to ensure this doesn't happen again. This includes the work of our Energy Supply Taskforce, a new oil and gas licensing round, lifting the moratorium on UK shale gas production, and driving forward progress on nuclear and renewables.

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## **Russia's veto doesn't change the facts: UK statement at the UN Security Council vote to condemn illegal referenda in Ukraine**

President, yet again, Russia has abused its veto to defend its illegal actions.

Council members have voted in different ways. But one thing is clear. Not a single other member of this Council recognises Russia's attempted illegal annexation of Ukrainian territory. Russia's veto doesn't change that fact.

The announcement by President Putin today of the accession of the Ukrainian regions of Kherson, Zaporizhzhya, Luhansk and Donetsk into the Russian Federation has no legal effect. It is a fantasy.

Russia's invasion needs to end. The world has made this clear for 7 months. Yet Russia's response has been further escalation, further mobilisation, nuclear threats, and today another callous attack on a civilian convoy in Zaporizhzhya.

The sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine is under attack. The international system is being assaulted in front of our eyes. Russia will not succeed in this illegal imperialist war. The only question is how much damage they do, how many lives they waste, before they realise that.

Colleagues, Russia's annexations further jeopardise the prospects for peace, and fundamentally undermine the Purposes and Principles of the United Nations.

The area Russia is claiming to annex is more than 90,000 square km. This is the largest forcible annexation since the Second World War.

There is no middle ground on this. It is in the end a very simple question of principle, as the Secretary General has said.

As members of the Security Council with the responsibility of maintaining international peace and security and upholding the UN Charter, we must condemn Russia's actions, and vote in favour of this resolution.

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## [We will continue to work alongside our partners to protect Europe's energy security](#)

I'd like to thank our briefers for setting out what we know so far about this case, which is still clearly very limited.

Once again in this chamber, we have heard some absurd Russian claims and conspiracy theories this afternoon.

Russia's request for this meeting was a cynical attempt to distract from President Putin's illegal annexation of Ukrainian territory today.

The damage to the Nordstream 1 and Nordstream 2 pipelines in the Baltic Sea is of deep concern.

These leaks are not only causing risks to shipping but also substantial environmental damage in the Baltic Sea. They are releasing enormous amounts of methane into the earth's atmosphere.

We agree with the assessment that all currently available information indicates this damage is the result of sabotage. We strongly support the investigations by Denmark, Sweden and Germany.

Intentional damage to civilian infrastructure is reckless and irresponsible, wherever it takes place. We must establish clear international norms that such damage is utterly unacceptable.

For NATO's part, as set out in yesterday's statement of the North Atlantic Council, Allies remain committed to prepare for, deter and defend against any hybrid tactics by state and non-state actors including coercive approaches to energy.

We are clear that any deliberate attack against Allies' critical infrastructure would be met with a united and determined response.

The UK will continue to work alongside our partners to protect Europe's energy security.

Thank you, President.

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## [Katherine Jenkins OBE Performs God Save The King On Board The HMS Queen Elizabeth Aircraft Carrier Against The New York Skyline](#)

The fifth Atlantic Future Forum (AFF) took place in New York Harbour, on board HMS Queen Elizabeth aircraft carrier. At the business reception hosted by the GREAT Britain & Northern Ireland Campaign, Welsh mezzo soprano Katherine Jenkins, the UK's biggest selling classical artist of the century and GREAT Ambassador, performed against the New York skyline alongside the Royal Marines Band.

The audience of over 500 distinguished high-profile business and political figures included Dame Karen Pierce, Britain's Ambassador to the United States, Kemi Badenoch, the UK's Secretary of State for International Trade, and Anne-Marie Trevelyan, Secretary of State for Transport for the UK.

The AFF is a conference hosted by the Royal Navy and led by the Department for International Trade. It brought senior politicians, business leaders, innovators, entrepreneurs, and military leaders from both sides of the Atlantic to tackle the biggest issues facing the world.

Both the AFF and GREAT celebrate the United Kingdom's special relationship with the United States – as exemplified by Katherine's rendition of both nations' anthems at the beginning of her performance.

Katherine says, > As a proud Welsh woman and Brit, it was wonderful to sing on board HMS Queen Elizabeth II in such an iconic setting. With family now on both sides of the pond, I loved seeing the UK and the US coming together in this truly amazing way.

The GREAT Campaign is delighted to return to New York, building on the success of its earlier GREAT Calling New York Campaign. GREAT Calling saw the campaign partner with dynamic UK companies and famous faces to deliver events on sport, music, food and AI, inviting US audiences to 'See Things Differently' and to see a fresh side of the UK.

Link to all images [here](#).

## **Background information**

About the GREAT Britain and Northern Ireland campaign for UK:

- The GREAT Britain and Northern Ireland campaign (GREAT) is the government's flagship international communications programme. The objective is to drive economic growth across the entire nation by encouraging an international audience to visit, study, trade, invest, live and work in the UK.
- Established in 2011, GREAT promotes the best of the UK and has been used in 149 countries worldwide, and by 22 government departments and ALBs, providing HMG's international network with a high-quality, impactful and consistent communications brand.

About GREAT Britain and Northern Ireland Campaign for US:

- The GREAT Britain and Northern Ireland campaign (GREAT) is the UK's international promotional program. It works closely with UK businesses, not-for-profit organisations and high-profile figures to promote the very best of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, encouraging the world to visit, study, live and do business with the UK.
- GREAT invites the world to 'See Things Differently' and to see a fresh side of the UK. GREAT showcases the UK as dynamic, outward looking, confident and collaborative – bringing unconventional thinking to the global challenges we face.