

## [Movement Assistance Scheme expanded to support organic produce](#)

Traders moving organic products to Northern Ireland are now eligible for support following the expansion of a scheme designed to ease the flow of agri-food goods from Great Britain, Defra has announced today.

The Movement Assistance Scheme means traders do not need to pay certain certification costs for moving agri-food goods, with the costs incurred by those certifying the products – now including organic control bodies – reimbursed by government up to a set amount.

The scheme also includes a dedicated helpline for general enquiries and together these measures are making it easier to move agri-food goods from Great Britain to Northern Ireland. During January, over 100 organisations signed up to the scheme, with the costs of over 4,000 export health certificates covered.

Farming, Fisheries and Food Minister Victoria Prentis said:

We want to ensure that people in Northern Ireland can continue to enjoy a wide range of organic products and that the process of getting these goods to them is as smooth as possible for traders.

Including the cost of certification for organic agri-food goods in the Movement Assistance Scheme minimises the impact of the new requirements for traders and means there will still be a variety of choice for consumers.

Since 1 January 2021, there have been new requirements for inspection and certification when moving agri-food and similar goods from Great Britain to Northern Ireland.

This includes meeting new sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) requirements given that the island of Ireland is treated as a single epidemiological unit. These SPS requirements include Export Health Certificates and Phytosanitary certificates for specific agri-food goods.

Authorised traders, such as supermarkets and their trusted suppliers, currently benefit from a grace period from certification requirements for products of animal origin, composite products, food and feed of non-animal origin and plants and plant products as well as organic products.

The Movement Assistance Scheme will cover the cost of Organic Certificate of Inspections. It does not currently cover the costs for getting certified as an organic exporter, though the Government is continuing to monitor the performance of the scheme to determine what further support may be required.

[Guidance on the new scheme](#) and moving agri-food goods to and from Northern Ireland is available.

If you would like further information on moving agri-food goods from GB to NI, please contact the Movement Assistance Scheme (MAS) helpline on 0330 0416 580. MAS can help you by offering support and advice, and information around GB to NI processes and policy. The helpline is open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm (excluding bank holidays).

Traders who have queries relating to moving organic products from GB to NI can also contact their control body for advice.

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## [Appointment of the Director General, Propriety and Ethics](#)

Press release

Darren Tierney appointed Director General, Propriety and Ethics



The Cabinet Secretary, with the approval of the Prime Minister, has appointed Darren Tierney as the new Director General, Propriety and Ethics.

Darren joins from the Department for International Trade where he was most recently the Director General of Global Trade and Investment. He has held a number of senior roles across a 20 year career in the Civil Service, including at the Ministry of Justice and the Cabinet Office.

The Director General, Propriety and Ethics, oversees the Honours Secretariat and Privy Council Office and provides support for the Cabinet Secretary on the operation of Government, including propriety and ethics advice to all government departments on standards and ethics issues. The purpose of the role is to ensure the highest standards of propriety, integrity and governance within Government.

Darren will begin his role on Monday 22nd March 2021.

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## [Global Travel Taskforce meets to map out safe return to international travel](#)

- group will focus on developing a framework to enable more international travel
- key industry players from the aviation, maritime, cruise, international rail and tourism sectors to play a critical role in developing recommendations
- plan will be underpinned by the latest scientific data, keeping the country safe from new COVID variants

The Secretary of State Grant Shapps has today (2 March 2021) chaired the first meeting of the new [Global Travel Taskforce](#) to set out a plan for restarting international travel in a safe and sustainable way.

Several government departments, industry bodies, transport operators and travel agencies met to discuss the work of the taskforce and how international travel can be re-opened safely.

This includes developing a new risk-based framework to facilitate international travel, using the suite of measures the government already has in place, such as testing and isolation, and the [recommendations from the first Global Travel Taskforce last year](#).

They will also look at how existing measures, such as the government's testing and isolation schemes, could be used to facilitate travel while managing the risk of imported cases and 'variants of concern'.

It will also take place in parallel and be closely integrated with the review into COVID-status certification led by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

The taskforce will provide a report to the Prime Minister on 12 April, which will be used to help government determine when and how to resume safe international travel no earlier than 17 May 2021.

The decision on when international travel can resume will be dependent on:

- the global and domestic epidemiological picture

- the prevalence and location of any 'variants of concern'
- the progress of vaccine rollouts here and abroad
- what more the government has learned about the efficacy of vaccines on variants, and the impact on transmission, hospitalisation and deaths

All measures will be kept under review, and people should continue to follow national restrictions for England introduced on 6 January 2021, meaning everyone must stay at home unless travelling for a very limited set of reasons.

Secretary of State for Transport Grant Shapps said:

The UK's leading vaccine rollout has created a wave of optimism and, as a result, the Global Travel Taskforce is charged with exploring safe and secure ways to restart international travel when the time is right.

By planning carefully considered steps, we will protect the excellent progress made through our vaccine and advanced testing programme, whilst ensuring we are ready to kick-start our travel sector when current travel restrictions can be lifted.

We will not only consider the progress of our world-beating domestic vaccine programme but also need to review where destination countries have got to with both vaccine and testing capabilities.

The government has already put in place a range of tough measures to minimise the risk of COVID-19 transmission at the border, including the:

All international arrivals must also take a [COVID-19 test on both day 2 and day 8 of their self-isolation period](#) – with genome sequencing included within the cost of the testing bundle.

Passengers arriving from 'non-red list' countries still have the option to pay for a private test and shorten their self-isolation period by up to half through [Test to Release](#), on receipt of a negative COVID-19 result.

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## [Pharmacist jailed for 12 months for illegal sale and supply of prescription medicines](#)

A pharmacist from Sutton Coldfield was sentenced at Birmingham Crown Court today to twelve months imprisonment for selling hundreds of thousands of

doses of addictive prescription drugs onto the black market. The medicines were sold at huge profit during 2016 and 2017. The value of these pills on the black market is estimated at over £1 million.

Balkeet Singh Khaira, 36, worked at his mother's pharmacy in West Bromwich and made over £59,000 from the Class C drugs, which are prescribed for pain relief and to treat conditions such as anxiety and insomnia.

Following an investigation led by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), investigators and partners from West Midlands Police, visited the pharmacy. Records found on the premises showed that of hundreds of thousands of doses of diazepam, nitrazepam, tramadol, zolpidem and zopiclone purchased from wholesalers, only a small percentage had been dispensed against prescription. This left more than 800,000 pills unaccounted for that Khaira later admitted he had sold to drug dealers.

The investigation began following allegations that the pharmacy was selling large quantities of prescription-only medicine without a prescription. When contacted about the investigation by the General Pharmaceutical Council, Khaira pretended to be his mother and said he was "shocked and blindsided" by the accusations. He then went on to provide falsified evidence intended to disprove the allegations.

While Khaira has admitted to the charges, he claims that after initially making a voluntary sale to drug dealers he was then forced to sell further medicines after he was threatened outside of his pharmacy. He has refused to provide any information on who these people were or who he sold to.

Khaira was suspended from the General Pharmaceutical Council's pharmacist register under an interim order, meaning that he was unable to practice while waiting for the case to come to court.

His mother, whose pharmacy he worked at, was not involved in any of the criminal activity.

**Grant Powell, the MHRA Enforcement officer leading the case, said:**

"It is a serious criminal offence to sell controlled, unlicensed or prescription-only medicines in this way.

"Anyone who sells medicines illegally could be exploiting vulnerable people and clearly has no regard for their health or welfare. Prescription only medicines are potent and should only be taken under medical supervision.

"We work closely with regulatory and law enforcement partners to identify and prosecute those involved.

"If you think you have been offered a medicine illegally, or have any information about suspected or known illegal trading in medicines, please contact the MHRA."

Khaira pleaded guilty to 5 counts of supplying controlled class C drugs at Birmingham Crown Court on 09/02/2021.

## Notes to Editor

Balkeet Singh Khaira (Date of birth: 06/03/1983) is from All Saints Drive, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands, B74 4AG and worked at Khaira Care Limited, trading as "Khaira Pharmacy" based at 6A High Street, West Bromwich, B70 6JX.

He qualified as a pharmacist in 2008 and was working in the family business.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency is responsible for regulating all medicines and medical devices in the UK. All our work is underpinned by robust and fact-based judgements to ensure that the benefits justify any risks.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency ('the agency') has three centres. The MHRA, the [National Institute for Biological Standards and Control \(NIBSC\)](#) and the [Clinical Practice Research Datalink \(CPRD\)](#). The agency is an executive agency of the Department of Health and Social Care.

If you think you've been offered a medicine illegally or have any information about suspected or known illegal dealings with medicines, please contact us, the MHRA, on 020 3080 6330 (weekdays 9am to 5pm) or out-of-hours on 07795 825 727. Or email us at [casereferrals@mhra.gov.uk](mailto:casereferrals@mhra.gov.uk)

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## [Six new Nightingale courtrooms to open in London and Birmingham](#)

### News story

Rooms form part of HMCTS commitment to open 60 Nightingale courtrooms by the end of the March.



- Barbican and Maple House Nightingale courts begin hearing cases this week
- part of government's plan to ensure justice continues throughout the pandemic

- 50 courtrooms now open nationwide

From this week, Maple House in Birmingham city centre will provide four additional courtrooms, freeing up space at Birmingham Crown Court. A venue in Barbican in central London will provide two courtrooms and hear cases from across the city. This brings the total number of Nightingale courtrooms to 50.

The moves form part of a £113m investment to ease pressures on courts and tribunals, including recruiting 1,600 extra staff, further technology, and on-site safety precautions such as plexiglass screens. This is in addition to the £142m being spent to speed up technological improvements and modernise courtrooms. The impact of these measures is already being seen:

- England and Wales are believed to be the first comparable major jurisdictions in the world to resume jury trials, with hundreds now being listed each week
- outstanding cases in the magistrates' courts have fallen by over 50,000 since the peak last summer
- the number of cases resolved in the Crown Courts reached pre-pandemic levels in December 2020
- more than 20,000 hearings using remote technology are taking place each week – compared to around 550 in March 2020 – a 4000% rise

Courts Minister, Chris Philp MP, said:

We have achieved an immense amount in our battle to keep justice moving in during the pandemic – restarting jury trials before anyone else, turbo-charging the rollout of video technology, bringing magistrates' backlogs down, and opening more courtrooms for jury trials.

These new courtrooms are the latest step in that effort, and I am determined to minimise delays and ensure justice is served for Londoners.

That is why we are investing hundreds of millions to drive this recovery further, deliver swifter justice and support victims.

The decision to keep courts and tribunals open during the pandemic has had a tangible impact on people's lives. Between April and September 2020 over 9,000 court orders were issued to protect children from female genital mutilation, forced marriage, and domestic abuse.

Meanwhile, a major £40m investment announced last month will go towards specialist help for vulnerable victims – funding helplines and the recruitment of more counsellors. This comes as an extra £337m was confirmed in the recent Spending Review to deliver swifter justice and support victims in 2021/22, while £76m will further increase capacity in family courts and tribunals.

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