

## New digital case management system delivers centralised access to criminal case information



The system provides secure access to the most up-to date case information for all the parties involved in criminal cases – including the judiciary, solicitors and barristers, the Crown Prosecution Service and court staff.

At the same time, our Courts and Tribunals Service Centre (CTSC) in Birmingham has begun managing administrative work in support of magistrates' courts. Staff have been fully trained and are now handling the calls and emails regarding Common Platform cases.

The next courts to go live with Common Platform will be Bristol Crown and Magistrates' Courts. They will be followed by North Tyneside, Mid and South-East Northumberland Magistrates' Courts, and Newcastle Crown Court.

Common Platform will be introduced to a series of other early adopter courts before rolling out to all criminal courts across England and Wales.

Kevin Sadler, Acting Chief Executive of HM Courts & Tribunal Service, said:

The Common Platform will provide smarter, more joined up and more streamlined processes and help us deliver more effective and swifter criminal justice for all.

This is a key milestone in our Reform programme, that will improve efficiency and reduce the generation of physical paperwork aiding the delivery of justice.

I'm very proud to see the beginning of the rollout of Common Platform to courts, as I know it will deliver benefits for us and our partner agencies along with everyone involved in the criminal justice system.

Defence professionals can [register for accounts to access Common Platform](#) in early adopter courts.

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Added translation

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## [Preferred candidate for chair of the Independent Monitoring Authority](#)

News story

Sir Ashley Fox announced as the preferred candidate to be the inaugural chair of the Independent Monitoring Authority for the Citizens' Rights Agreements.



The Lord Chancellor, the Rt Hon Robert Buckland QC, confirmed today (12 November 2020) that his preferred candidate to be the first chair of the Independent Monitoring Authority for the Citizens' Rights Agreements (IMA) is Sir Ashley Fox.

Sir Ashley has been selected following a rigorous assessment process conducted in accordance with the principles of the Governance Code on Public Appointments.

The role is subject to a pre-appointment hearing by the Justice Select Committee. Pre-appointment scrutiny is an important part of the appointment process for some of the most significant public appointments made by ministers. It is designed to provide an added level of scrutiny to the appointment process.

Pre-appointment hearings are held in public and allow a select committee to take evidence before a candidate is appointed. Ministers consider the committee's views before deciding whether to proceed with the appointment.

## **Independent Monitoring Authority for the Citizens' Rights Agreements**

The IMA is a brand-new public body, which has been established under the [EU \(Withdrawal Agreement\) Act 2020 \(EUWAA\)](#). The IMA needs to be operational by the end of 2020. The chair of the IMA will play a crucial role in establishing the IMA's early direction and effectiveness, and in winning the confidence of its stakeholders.

Under the provisions set out in EUWAA, the IMA will have the power to receive complaints, launch inquiries and initiate legal proceedings. The IMA will also have a role in reviewing the effectiveness of the citizens' rights legislative framework, for instance by reviewing draft legislation. The legislation also provides that it is important for the IMA to focus on general or systemic failures in the implementation of the citizens' rights agreements, as well as receiving and investigating individual complaints. The IMA will have to publish guidance on how it will exercise its functions.

## **Ashley Fox biography**

Sir Ashley is a business consultant providing strategic advice on the European Union. Since 2015 he has been the lay member on the Leadership Nomination Committee of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. Sir Ashley served as MEP for the South West of England and Gibraltar from 2009 to 2019. He was Leader of the Conservative MEPs from 2014 to 2019. Prior to being elected Sir Ashley practised as a solicitor in Bristol.

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## **[Minister for Equalities speaks to pre-eclampsia experts at global event](#)**

- Minister to question experts at global 'Action on Pre-eclampsia' meeting
- Maternal mortality now occurs in fewer than 1 in 10,000 pregnancies, but the disparity between Black women and White women has widened in the past decade and we still lose more than 1000 babies per year to pre-eclampsia

The Minister for Equalities, Kemi Badenoch, will today [12 November] attend the annual Expert Meeting held by Action on Pre-Eclampsia, speaking to frontline clinicians and specialists from around the world on pre-eclampsia post COVID-19.

She will set out what the Government has been doing on maternal health, and question the experts on how to tackle pre-eclampsia and protect women and their babies.

It is safer to have a baby in the UK than it was 10 years ago, and the UK has one of the lowest rates of maternal mortality in the world. Tragic maternal deaths now occur in fewer than 1 in 10,000 pregnancies.

But evidence shows that black British mothers are five times more likely to die in pregnancy or six weeks after childbirth, than white women. Women of mixed ethnicity have three times the risk, and Asian women almost twice the risk. Ethnic minority women are also at an increased risk of having a pre-term birth, stillbirth, neonatal death or a baby born with low birth weight.

The Minister will say at the event: "there is a need to debunk the myth that all complications and fatalities are due to childbirth, when it is pre-existing health conditions like heart disease, diabetes, and mental health that largely explain the disparities."

She will also emphasise that we need to shift the conversation to avoid misleading black women into thinking that giving birth is unsafe, whilst emphasising the importance of personal health and fitness, and presenting early to doctors, even during the pandemic.

**Minister for Equalities, Kemi Badenoch, said:**

"This year I returned from maternity leave after having my third child, so this is a topic that is very close to my heart.

"The UK is one of the safest places in the world to give birth and clinicians manage pre-eclampsia well. Seeking care before and throughout pregnancy is important and we want all women to have the access and confidence in this care the NHS provides. Particularly in a pandemic.

"Although maternal deaths are fortunately very rare, behind these tragic statistics, there are devastating consequences for families and children, so it is vital that we tackle this complex and concerning issue."

**Marcus Green, CEO of Action on Pre-eclampsia, said:**

"Disparities in outcomes for pregnant women are complex, even more so in the UK which remains one of the safest countries for a woman to give birth. We need to break down the barriers to ensure all women get the care they need. It is fantastic that the Minister used this occasion to engage with experts in pre-eclampsia which remains a leading cause of maternal mortality and leads to the unnecessary death of over 1000 babies a year."

Government is committed to supporting all pregnant women and their children.

The Minister for Equalities co-hosted a roundtable on maternal mortality rates for ethnic minority women with Health Minister Nadine Dorries in September.

At the roundtable the Ministers heard expert evidence and listened to recommendations from top academics, frontline midwives and healthcare professionals, with the goal of developing joint solutions to benefit pregnant women and their babies.

Measures have been taken across the health services to protect women, with an aim to halve stillbirths, maternal mortality, neonatal mortality, and serious brain injury by 2025:

- NHS England has provided funding for Placental Growth Factor testing which detects the likelihood of a woman developing pre-eclampsia.
- Government has also set up a new model of community hubs, which bring a range of perinatal and sometimes intrapartum care services together in one setting closer to women's homes to identify potential problems sooner. They have been opened across the country, with more than 100 new hubs open as of December 2019.
- Recommendations from the landmark [National Maternity Review: Better Births](#) are being implemented through Local Maternity Systems – bringing together the NHS, local authorities and other local partners to ensure mother and baby receive seamless care.
- The National Health Service has also launched a new phase of its 'Help us Help You' campaign that focuses on maternity services. This campaign reminds pregnant women about the importance of attending check-ups, contacting their midwife or maternity team when something doesn't feel right, and reassures them that the NHS is here to see them safely.

**Vijya Varshani, whose baby died because of pre-eclampsia, said:**

"My son was taken from us by pre-eclampsia. Being a mum is something I have always dreamed of and it felt like my world came crashing down on me and all my dreams were shattered.

"On the evening of 26th September 2012 everything stopped around me, to be told my baby had no heartbeat and was gone. I had never felt so alone and helpless, the numbness that went through me and to have to make the call to inform my husband that our baby had gone was heart-breaking.

"Action on Pre-eclampsia (APEC) helped me so much with getting through the loss of my son, I was put in touch with experts who could help counsel me and see a light at the end of the tunnel. I remember being so scared about having another child and being able to speak with an expert helped me get through

this phase. Without the help of APEC I would have always lived with the same questions; What did I do wrong? What if?"

Given that COVID-19 has fundamentally changed the way that women access maternity services, the National Maternity Safety Champion and Chief Midwifery Officer for England gave a four-point plan for all maternity services in England to follow.

That includes increasing support for at-risk pregnant women, tailoring communications to reassure ethnic minority women, ensuring that hospitals discuss vitamin supplements and nutrition in pregnancy with all women, and ensuring that all providers record on ethnicity on maternity information systems.

## **Notes to editors**

- Action on Pre-eclampsia (APEC) aims to raise public and professional awareness of pre-eclampsia, improve care, and ease or prevent physical and emotional suffering caused by the disease.
- APEC is a charity registered in the UK. They run a helpline and provide information to members of the public who are affected by pre-eclampsia – be this pregnant women, their family and friends and anyone worried about pre-eclampsia. They run study days for midwives and health professionals who work with pregnant women, providing expert training on detection and management of pre-eclampsia. They also facilitate a unique expert referral service, whereby women can be referred by their GPs to an expert on pre-eclampsia in their area. APEC also provides leaflets to hospitals and maternity units informing women about pre-eclampsia and the importance of antenatal care.
- From 2015–2020, National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) programmes invested £59.8 million on 61 awards conducting research into miscarriage, premature birth and stillbirth. Additionally, the NIHR Policy Research Programme funds a Policy Research Unit dedicated to Maternal and Neonatal Health and Care research (PRU-MHC) (2019-2023) based at the National Perinatal Epidemiology Unit, University of Oxford and led by Professor Jenny Kurinczuk.

## **Case study**

### **Vijya Varshani's full story**

My name is Vijya Varshani and this is my story of pre-eclampsia and how my son was taken from us by this condition.

Being a mum is something I have always dreamed of and it felt like my world came crashing down on me and all my dreams were shattered.

In early May 2012 we discovered that I was pregnant with our first child and I couldn't have been more excited about it.

I was always made to believe that carrying a child was the most amazing experience and enjoyable time but my pregnancy was not at all what I expected. In the early stages I had bleeding and was advised I may have suffered a miscarriage but the scan revealed otherwise and that was the first time I saw my baby.

The pregnancy progressed and I had a scan at 13 weeks and everything was going well but as weeks went by I started to experience severe headaches and my blood pressure had started to rise. I was put on blood pressure medication to try to bring this under control.

At my 20 week scan I was told that my baby was smaller than what was normal at this stage of the pregnancy, as was referred to have growth scans. My blood pressure was monitored weekly and I was told I had early onset of pre-eclampsia.

I was feeling very ill with severe headaches, getting very bad swelling on my feet, flashing lights before my eyes.

At 24 weeks of my pregnancy I was admitted into hospital with very high blood pressure and protein in my urine tests I was kept in hospital in the high dependency unit I was stabilised and was able to move to another hospital where they would be able to take better care.

I was told by the doctors that I would not be able to go home until the baby was born; it was frightening with it being so early in my pregnancy, everyday I prayed for the safe arrival of my baby.

On the evening of 26 September 2012 everything stopped around me, to be told my baby had no heartbeat and was gone. I had never felt so alone and helpless, the numbness that went through me and to have to make the call to inform my husband that our baby had gone was heart-breaking.

At 9:21pm on 27 September 2012 our son Krishan Priyesh Varshani was born sleeping at just 27 weeks of my pregnancy.

After the loss of my son I was determined that I wanted to help raise more awareness of this condition as personally having gone through this I was asked by many family members and friends what this condition was.

We decided to do a fundraiser and came in contact with APEC and whom we decided we would do our fundraising for.

APEC helped me so much with getting through the loss of my son, I was put in touch with experts who could help counsel me and see a light at the end of the tunnel.

I remember being so scared about having another child and being able to speak with an expert helped me get through this phase. Without the help of APEC I would have always lived with the same questions; What did I do wrong? What

if? The staff that work for APEC are always so warm and welcoming to speak with. I was never afraid to pick up the phone or send an email to them.

I am now a mum to two lovely boys aged 6 years old and 3 years old. My family is complete.

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## [Interactive GCSE and A level data visualisations updated](#)

News story

Data on A level and GCSE comparative outcomes, centre variability and results across England can now be viewed in series of interactive visualisations.



Ofqual has today updated [7 interactive visualisations](#) which show summer 2020 A level and GCSE grade outcomes, centre variability and results across England.

The search tools are updated every year and present data in an engaging way. Each of the visualisations allows users to compare results from 2020 to previous years.

This year the 2020 grades displayed are the final grades the candidate received – the centre assessment grade or calculated grade, whichever was higher.

The visualisations updated with this summer's results are:

1. **GCSE centre variability:** these interactive graphs show the centre variability at grade 4/C and above or grade 7/A and above for selected GCSE subjects.
2. **A level centre variability:** these interactive graphs show the centre



variability at grade A and above for eighteen larger entry subjects in A level.

3. **GCSE 'map app'**: the map shows, for each county in England, reformed GCSE full course results (the percentage of students achieving specific grades) for the summer 2020, as well as recent summer examinations series.
4. **A level 'map app'**: the map shows for each county in England, A level results (the percentage of students achieving specific grades) for the summer 2020, as well as recent summer examination series.
5. **GCSE grade outcomes**: interactive graphs which show outcomes across all subjects for all students for the years 2008 to 2020 and for 16-year olds for the years 2013 to 2020.
6. **A level grade outcomes**: interactive graphs show A level outcomes across all subjects for all students for the years 2008 to 2020 and for 18-year olds for the years 2017 to 2020.
7. **9 to 1 app (GCSE only)**: these graphs allow users to see grade distributions for all full course GCSE 9 to 1 subjects for students in schools and colleges in England. You can select a combination of three subjects, which shows how performance on one GCSE relates to performance on other GCSEs.

To view the interactive visualisations, visit the [Ofqual Data Analytics page](#).

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