

# Vulnerable groups set to benefit from improved legal aid support

A purple rectangular graphic with white text that reads "Domestic violence injunctions during the coronavirus pandemic." The text is in a serif font and is arranged in four lines. The background is a solid purple color.

- immediate access to individual support for debt, discrimination and special educational needs cases to be restored
- greater access to legal aid for domestic abuse survivors
- government delivers on Legal Aid Support Action plan commitments

Changes made by the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) include expanding evidence requirements needed to qualify for legal aid for domestic abuse victims, to make this process easier, and reinstating immediate access to individual help for debt, discrimination and special educational needs (SEN) cases – initially via video link, then face to face when social distancing measures are no longer in place.

The Legal Aid Agency (LAA) will also be given the power to backdate payments for applications of legal help for inquests to the time at which the application was made, rather than when the application was granted.

Justice Minister, Alex Chalk MP said:

We are improving support for some of the most vulnerable people in the justice system – something that is particularly important during these challenging times.

This is the latest step in delivering our vision of a system that focuses on individuals and enables them to resolve legal problems quickly and easily.

MOJ is delivering on key government commitments made last year to broaden access to civil legal aid by reviewing legal aid means testing.

Alongside these measures, additional support is available to protect victims of domestic abuse during the coronavirus outbreak. The government recently published guidance on applying for domestic abuse injunctions remotely and we are boosting domestic abuse helplines and online support with an additional £2 million.

This statutory instrument has been laid in Parliament today (21 April 2020) and the changes will come into effect from 15 May 2020.

## Notes to editors

- This statutory instrument will make several important changes:
  - The removal of the mandatory requirement to contact the Civil Legal Aid Telephone Gateway for those seeking legal aid in discrimination, debt, and special educational needs cases, delivering on our Legal Support Action Plan commitment.
  - The removal of the mandatory requirement that an application for legal aid for Family Mediation must always attend the mediator's premises to make an application.
  - Changes to the evidence requirements that need to be satisfied in order to qualify for legal aid as a victim of domestic abuse. This is achieved by allowing the Independent domestic violence advisor (IDVA) and the independent sexual violence advisor (ISVA) to accept past support, and broaden the areas that evidence are accepted from England and Wales to the entire United Kingdom.
  - Legal aid firms are now able to carry out work at risk whilst waiting for an LAA decision. If approved they will receive payment from the date that they make the application on behalf of families, rather than the date the decision was made to award funding.
- MOJ announced these legislative changes in February 2019 in the Legal Support Action Plan, with a commitment to deliver them by spring 2020.
- [Guidance on how to apply for a domestic abuse injunction](#) is available on GOV.UK.

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## [York flood scheme continues in line with Covid-19 guidelines](#)

The organisation has, however, said in light of the Coronavirus situation and Government advice it is cancelling all public meetings until it is safe to hold them again.

Ben Hughes, project director of the scheme, said:

We are doing all we can to ensure work continues as much as is

feasible, and that delays caused by the knock-on effects of this pandemic are kept to an absolute minimum.

Our priority in these difficult times is the health, safety and wellbeing of residents and staff, so we have closed our drop-in hub on Wellington Row and we will not be holding any public engagement events.

As an organisation we are doing everything we can to support our community, our government and the NHS by abiding by these measures.

The Agency recently completed work to raise the height of the North Street flood defence, which successfully handled its first test when the city suffered flooding earlier this year.

The work saw new flood gates installed, including a new wider gate to allow better flow for pedestrians into North Street gardens.

Mr Hughes said:

This February was the wettest since records began, with peak river levels at the Viking recorder reaching 4.47m. During this time the gates and wall did their job.

To complete this flood cell and increase the level of protection to properties in this area we still need to replace the floodgate under Lendal arch which is programmed for this September.

Work is also due to continue on raising the embankment between Water End bridge and Scarborough Bridge, behind St Peter's School.

Two of the flood 'cells' that make up the wider York flood alleviation scheme – Clementhorpe and the Foss flood storage area – are due to be heard by the local authority planning committees next month.

The Clementhorpe scheme, which will better protect 135 homes, is due to be heard by City of York Council planning committee on 9 April.

Plans include a floodgate at the junction of Clementhorpe and Terry Avenue, as well as flood defence walls at Waterfront House and Lower Ebor Street.

There will also be additional flood defences built behind Rowntree Park and the adjoining caravan park.

The Foss flood storage area would be built north of Strensall on the River Foss. It would hold back water and slow the flow back into the city in times of heavy rainfall.

Along with the upgraded Foss Barrier, this would better protect more than 1,000 properties along the Foss corridor, such as Huntington Road.

Due to the flood storage area straddling two local authorities, the planning application will be heard by both Ryedale District Council and City of York Council.

A planning application has also been submitted for flood defence work at Bishopthorpe, but due to bird nesting season we may not be able to start work until September.

Mr Hughes added that his team is currently going through a period of readjustment to widespread home working, and we are putting systems in place to support this.

He said they will continue to monitor the York flood alleviation scheme mailbox ([yorkfloodplan@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:yorkfloodplan@environment-agency.gov.uk)) and respond to correspondence when and where possible.

If you want to find out about flood risk in your area, up-to-date information can be found [by clicking here](#) or you can call Floodline on 0345 988 1188.

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## [Southend bankrupt has bankruptcy restrictions extended](#)

Carlton James Johnson-Vaughton (48) has had his bankruptcy restrictions extended and, for the next nine years, will need to disclose his status each time he attempts to secure £500 or more in credit.

In March 2019 the Westcliff-on-Sea resident obtained a £25,000 loan before applying for his own bankruptcy just two months later.

Following an investigation into Carlton Johnson-Vaughton's affairs by the Official Receiver, it was discovered that he provided false information about his income and created fake wage slips to support his application for the loan, which he had no reasonable expectation of being able to repay.

The investigation also uncovered that he had used, and lost, the £25,000 loan monies on gambling.

On 6 March 2020, Carlton Johnson-Vaughton had his nine year Bankruptcy Restriction Undertaking accepted by the Secretary of State which, in addition to restricting his access to credit, means he cannot act as a company director without the permission of the court.

Sallie Rose, the Official Receiver, said:

Carlton Johnson-Vaughton cynically and dishonestly obtained credit, and squandered the funds on gambling, in the few short weeks prior

to filing for his own bankruptcy.

To protect the market from further abuse, we secured extended bankruptcy restrictions which will prevent him from borrowing money from unwary lenders in the future.

Carlton James Johnson-Vaughton's date of birth is November 1971.

Public-facing details of Carlton James Johnson-Vaughton's Bankruptcy Restrictions Undertaking is [available on the Individual Insolvency Register](#).

Bankruptcy restrictions are wide ranging. The effects are the same whether you are subject to a bankruptcy restrictions order or to an undertaking. Guidance on the main statutory consequences flowing from a [bankruptcy restrictions order or undertaking](#).

[Information about the work of the Insolvency Service, and how to complain about financial misconduct](#).

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on:

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## [Non-Executive appointment to MOJ Departmental Board and Chair of Audit and Risk Committee](#)

- Only go outside for food, health reasons or work (but only if you cannot work from home)
- If you go out, stay 2 metres (6ft) away from other people at all times
- Wash your hands as soon as you get home

Do not meet others, even friends or family.

You can spread the virus even if you don't have symptoms.

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## [Chancellor expands loan scheme for large businesses](#)

- All viable businesses with turnover of more than £45m will be able to apply for UK Government-backed support;

- Firms with turnover of more than £250 million can borrow up to £50 million from lenders;
- This complements existing support including the Covid Corporate Financing Facility and the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme.

A UK government-backed loan scheme for large businesses affected by coronavirus has been expanded to cover all viable firms, the Chancellor announced today.

Outlining further details of the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loans Scheme (CLBILS) ahead of its launch on Monday, Rishi Sunak said all firms with a turnover of more than £45 million will now be able to apply for up to £25 million of finance, and up to £50 million for firms with a turnover of more than £250 million.

Business with turnovers of more than £500 million were originally not eligible for the scheme, which is being set up to help firms who do not qualify for the existing Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme – for small and medium sized businesses – and the Bank of England Covid Corporate Financing Facility – for investment grade companies. The move, which comes after extensive consultation with businesses, will ensure even more firms are able to benefit from UK Government support.

### **The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak, said:**

I want to ensure that no viable business slips through our safety net of support as we help protect jobs and the economy. That is why we are expanding this generous scheme for larger firms.

This is a national effort and we'll continue to work with the financial services sector to ensure that our £330 billion of government support, through loans and guarantees, reaches as many businesses in need as possible.

### **Secretary of State for Wales, Simon Hart, said:**

We are completely committed to protecting businesses of all sizes during this emergency. By expanding this scheme to cover even more businesses, we are ensuring that as many companies as possible across the UK can access the support they need.

The UK Government will continue to do whatever it takes to help all those who need it. The £330 billion of UK Government support for businesses small and large will help us to get through this emergency together, protecting jobs and the economy while we work to tackle the coronavirus.

**The Business Secretary, Alok Sharma, said:**

Coronavirus has struck a heavy blow against businesses of all sizes across the UK. Expanding this scheme will provide larger firms with the support they need during the pandemic, helping to provide job security to thousands of people and protect our economy.

The UK Government will provide lenders with a guarantee of 80% on each loan to give lenders further confidence in continuing to provide finance.

The scheme will be available through a series of accredited lenders, which will be listed on the British Business Bank website.

This support complements the unprecedented help available for businesses large and small, including CBILS, CCCFF, tax deferrals, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, cash grants for small businesses, and covering the cost of statutory sick pay.

The UK Government recognises many start up and early stage companies are facing challenges and are working with industry to assess these and consider further ways to offer support.

**ENDS**