

Civil news: providers praise new online 'Apply' tool

A pilot group of providers are testing a new modern digital services platform designed to improve the efficiency of submitting legal aid applications.

The system will be used by both law firms and other providers of legal aid to process applications on behalf of clients. It will also be used by clients to progress their part of any legal aid application.

What are the other benefits?

It will 'trail-blaze' open banking and improve means testing by enabling clients to give us access to their bank statements online instead of on paper.

In future, we intend that the service will automatically access data from other government departments about an applicant's income and remove the need for scanned payslips.

Typical comments from the test group of providers working on domestic abuse applications, include:

new system is dynamic and smart.

Apply asked only necessary questions.

Generally, a much quicker and efficient way of doing it.

Apply is great, we've got it down to 6 minutes.

It's really good that you can edit the 'check your answers' page. I really like that I can edit just one section.

Providers on the trial say that they can spend more time helping clients rather than filling in forms.

What does this mean for CCMS?

Apply is part of our efforts to put the user first when we look at how we work with our contracted providers.

But we will also continue to maintain and improve the Client and Cost Management System (CCMS) for the submission of other proceedings, amendments and bills. See below for how to access CCMS training and resources.

How will the LAA roll out Apply?

A small number of providers in the pilot group working on high volume domestic abuse applications have started testing Apply on live cases. So far, we have received more than 70 applications using Apply.

The feedback they have provided will enable us to make further improvements before we increase the number of users and case types.

In the future, we aim to expand the test group of providers working on domestic abuse cases – see below for details if you are interested in applying to take part.

Further information

ATP@justice.gov.uk – email the transformation team with questions or register an interest in taking part in the trials if you work on domestic abuse cases

Economic secretary speech to the ABCUL

Thank you Liz Barclay. It really is a great pleasure to be here in Manchester for the second year running.

Not many City Ministers are invited to speak to ABCUL twice...

...in fairness, not many City Ministers have lasted long enough in the role to qualify, but I'll take my invitation as a compliment nonetheless.

I count myself fortunate to be asked by the Prime Minister to continue in post.

With the political turbulence of the past few years hopefully behind us, my aim is to serve as a point of continuity within the Treasury, and a trusted advisor to our new Chancellor, Rishi Sunak.

In that capacity, I very much remain an advocate for credit unions and community lenders; and having last year called for a new conversation between the Government and the sector I'm pleased to be able to continue that conversation today and reflect on the progress we've made.

It strikes me that the relevance of this sector and the potential it represents has grown over the past 12 months.

I'm sure you've heard the Government talk about the need to level-up

opportunity, investment and growth across the country.

Much of the focus has been on physical infrastructure like roads, railways and fibre-optic cables.

But just as important is the social infrastructure. Communities need to be financially inclusive and resilient if they are to be attractive, productive and fulfilling places to live and work.

There is no convenient one-size-fits-all model for the country.

Nor is it all about spreadsheets and number crunching, as much as economists love to try. It's about people and places too.

Credit unions, by their very nature, reflect the communities they serve. You have the insight and connections to meet diverse local needs in ways that big banks and big government often can't.

And with matters of responsibility, sustainability and trust rising up the consumer agenda, credit unions also have an authenticity that the corporate world is sometimes seen to lack.

You can reach parts of society that others can't.

You can beat the loan sharks and payday lenders to win the trust of lower-income borrowers who might not otherwise give mainstream financial services a second look.

And you can provide consumers of all types with an ethical home for their savings, where they can be confident their money is being used for good.

Challenges facing the sector

Despite these advantages, despite growing relevance, you will know as well as I do that the credit union movement in this country is not nearly as strong or successful as it could be.

As ABCUL's Town Hall consultation recognised, too many credit unions fail. Too few grow in a way that is sustainable. Many have struggled with matters of governance, leadership and regulatory compliance.

Don't get me wrong. I know there are shining examples of successful credit unions doing great things. I've visited several. I hear about others from fellow MPs and from constituents, and the Treasury has first-hand experience with some in our Prize Saver pilot.

To all those credit unions represented here today, I say congratulations and thank you. The good you do every day is recognised by me, and by the Government.

But for all the individual achievements, for all the promise and conviction, the sector somehow remains less than the sum of its parts.

Ironically, your great strength – your diversity – has also been a weakness.

Collectively, credit unions have found adapting to new technology and changing consumer needs difficult.

Together, you have struggled to have your voice heard, and as a result the sector remains in the margins when it has the potential to be so much more.

So, what needs to happen to unleash the potential that I know exists?

Let's start with what doesn't need to change – namely, the values that make you special.

The fact that credit unions are run by and for your members...

...that you are rooted in local communities...

...and exist to encourage responsible saving and affordable borrowing...

...these are all qualities to be cherished and nurtured.

Your members will always come first...but for some of you, it's about grasping the opportunities that exist around how you serve them.

It means offering a wider range of relevant and tailored products to serve changing consumer needs and expectations.

It means figuring out how to communicate the strengths of the mutual model to the next generation, and how to make credit unions relevant to their needs.

And it means working together to develop solutions to the shared challenges you face, harnessing the latest technology, including Open Banking.

Government Support

Government has a role to play, through legislation and regulation, and by helping the sector innovate.

At this Conference last year, I spoke about the Prize Linked Savings pilot to raise awareness and membership of credit unions.

In October last year, fifteen credit unions from across Great Britain launched new PrizeSaver accounts.

Since then, over 7,000 new accounts have been opened and 63 members have won prizes, including a Post Office worker who won £5,000 just before Christmas.

I understand Nationwide has already launched their own prize-linked savings account, which just goes to prove that imitation really is the sincerest form of flattery.

Our own pilot runs until next March. We will be assessing its success over the coming year to establish whether it is a financially sustainable model for the future.

Another innovation has been the Affordable Credit Challenge.

The Government made £2 million available to encourage FinTech firms to apply their ingenuity to the aim of widening access and awareness of affordable alternatives to high cost credit.

In Wednesday's Budget, the Government announced the three winners, each of which receive a further grant of £200,000 to take their ideas forward.

These include the Police Credit Union's partnership with Credit Kudos and Capital Credit Union's partnership with Nivo and Soar.

Meanwhile, Fair4All Finance is up-and-running. It was established to funnel £55 million from dormant bank accounts toward the cause of financial inclusion. This includes a pilot programme to develop capabilities in the affordable credit sector, including crucial skills around operations, governance and leadership.

Lastly, on the regulatory front, I was pleased to support the Prudential Regulation Authority's recent review of capital requirements for credit unions, including proposals to remove the 'cliff edge' in the capital requirements regime for larger credit unions.

Action Plan

Ultimately, however, it is not for government to bring about the change the sector needs.

Even if it could, it runs contrary to what credit unions are about. Your success is driven from the bottom up, not the top down.

The responsibility, and the opportunity, rests in the hands of you, and your members.

Last year, I urged the movement to come together to chart its own vision for the future.

A vision that you share and own, so you can speak with one voice.

I congratulate ABCUL for embracing this challenge so fully.

You've had the courage to ask difficult questions, and the ambition to demand more from the sector.

And I'm grateful to all those credit unions which made their voices heard in the Town Hall events.

ABCUL can only be effective in representing your needs to the Treasury if you engage with them.

'Vision 2025' represents a clear set of objectives around which credit unions can unite.

It provides a strategic and comprehensive view of the future.

Crucially it also offers a series of meaningful, practical measures to navigate the challenges you face in order to become stronger, more resilient and more successful.

And it outlines how ABCUL needs to change in order to help its members achieve this.

Now the hard work begins to make it a reality.

Where you can make a clear case for the Government to help, then we will.

As a case in point, I am delighted confirm that this week's Budget included the announcement that the Government is to bring forward legislation to amend the Credit Unions Act.

This will permit credit unions to offer a wider range of products and services than ever before.

Not only helping you better meet the needs of existing members, but also to reach new audiences, supporting the sector to grow in a way that is sustainable.

This might include helping people who aren't insured secure the protection they need.

Or it could involve helping people buy goods on hire purchase at more affordable rates, providing an alternative to exploitative rent-to-buy schemes.

No credit union will be forced to offer products and services it doesn't wish to.

This will be entirely optional and, of course, subject to regulatory oversight, PRA supervision and securing relevant FCA permissions.

The point is that the choice will rest with credit unions themselves – and with this choice, comes the freedom to pursue new revenues, new members and greater relevance.

As I said, it is for credit unions, individually and collectively, to decide what they want for the future.

But for those credit unions that have been calling for change, I hope this measure demonstrates that the Government has not only listened but has acted accordingly.

Conclusion

So, to conclude, there is a lot of action underway on many fronts.

The Government will continue to listen to credit unions and affordable lenders and, where we can, I want to do more to help the sector meet its ambitions for the future.

My door remains open to ABCUL. I'm looking forward to taking your questions in a moment.

And later this month I'll be speaking at an event in Parliament hosted by Pentecostal Credit Union.

But, as I hope I've conveyed, success rests not on what the Government can do for the sector – but what the sector can do for itself.

I'm encouraged by what I've seen and heard in recent weeks.

You have the people, the passion and now you have a Plan too.

Don't let it gather dust on a shelf – make it happen.

And I hope I can return next year, to reflect on your progress and continue this important conversation.

Thank you.

[Education Secretary speech at ASCL's Annual Conference](#)

Thank you Richard for that kind introduction.

It is a really great honour to be here.

I just wish we were meeting under better circumstances.

The latest figures show that almost 600 cases of the coronavirus have been diagnosed and I know that all of you will be anxious about what the outbreak means for you, your schools, your colleges but also your wider communities.

As headteachers you are having to be steadfast. Children, parents, staff are all relying on your guidance and leadership.

So before I say anything else, I would like to thank you for all that you have done. You continue to inspire so many of us with your calm, resilient, optimistic leadership in the face of adversity.

I also want to take this opportunity to reassure you that my department is working flat out with Public Health England to share the latest scientific and medical information and advice with you as and when we get it, so that you know as soon as we do.

Ever since Covid-19 started causing concerns in January, my department has been issuing regular guidance and updates on how you should respond to keep

your schools functioning and everyone in them fit and well.

We have daily updates and have launched a phone helpline and that's in addition to the guidance you can find from Public Health England and the Foreign Office.

Our GOV.UK site covers everything from preventing the spread of infection to what to do if a child in your care is ill or has returned to school from an area with a high infection rate.

The NHS has already tested over 29,000 people, including those who have travelled to areas where there are a high number of cases of Covid-19 and the vast majority of the results have been negative, so I urge you to bear this in mind.

In the overwhelming majority of situations, there is absolutely no need to close a school or send pupils or staff home. Obviously there is action to be taken in the event of a positive test but even then, your local health protection team can help stabilise the situation.

At present we are clear that the best course of action is to keep schools open unless you are advised to close by Public Health England.

The Chief Medical Officer has said the impact of closing schools on children's education will be substantial, but the benefit to public health would not be. The Government is particularly mindful of the strain on public services like the NHS that would be caused by key workers having to stay home to look after their children as a result of school closures.

We will be constantly reassessing this position based on what the Chief Medical Officer and the Government Chief Scientific Adviser tell us about whether the evidence would require us to close schools in the best interests of children and the best interests of teachers.

Only in line with this clear advice will we take this step.

Beyond this there are three things that are currently causing leaders more anxiety than anything else, so let me go through these one by one.

First, teachers and parents are understandably worried about school trips. While there is currently no need to cancel any domestic school trips or visits, we would ask you to make thorough risk assessments and be clear about what you'll need to do if anyone develops symptoms of the virus.

Second for those who are taking parties abroad we are in a situation that is changing very rapidly. The Government is advising all schools and colleges against overseas trips for under 18s.

Finally, I know your pupils will be worried about what all this means for their upcoming exams. This is only to be expected, especially when so much hard work has gone into them.

I see first-hand the enormous amount of work and effort that goes into exams

by children and their teachers. I want to reassure you that we are doing everything to make sure that this year's exams are fair for students, and that their efforts will be fairly rewarded.

My department is in regular discussions with Ofqual, ASCL, schools and other unions, and we will continue to work together on these issues. We will ensure students, parents and teachers are kept up to date.

Until then it is important that we keep our focus on delivering the best for every child in our schools and colleges to ensure they are well prepared to succeed and well prepared to excel.

Ladies and gentlemen, I couldn't do my job without knowing that at the helm of every school or college is an exceptional leader. So at the risk of repeating myself, I would like to thank you – and all your staff – again for the incredible leadership you have shown in some very trying circumstances.

My department stands ready to continue working with you and the rest of the sector so that we can get through this together.

Because the reason, the reason we are gathered here today is to discuss the business of giving our children a great start in life.

My department has such a wide remit that it is all too easy to underestimate what a key role education plays in society.

This government has been given a historic mandate to level up opportunity and transform the lives and prospects of a generation.

I want you to be in no doubt how important you are to these plans.

Education is one of the greatest levers of social change.

Through education we can build the kind of society we want to see... a society that is open, a society that is tolerant, a society where everyone, regardless of where they're born, has the chance to realise their full potential.

We know that it is great teaching and great leadership that makes a world-class education.

There is no better way to raise standards or improve schools than by boosting the quality of teaching. So my priority is to help all our teachers and leaders to be the best they can be, to continuously develop their knowledge and skills throughout their careers, so that every child in the classroom in every school gets a world-class start in life.

So I want to thank you for all that you and your colleagues have done over the past decade to make sure even more of these children, our children succeed.

But I don't expect you to do this all on your own. Government has a role to play.

Working with you to transform the support for teachers and leaders is at the centre of my vision for making ours a nation of opportunity and today I'm going to spell out how we're going to do it.

But before I do, I would like to talk about the issue of funding.

I know many of you have had to manage budgets for some time and this has meant difficult choices for you. When I was first appointed to this job, I recognised immediately that you were just not getting the money that you needed for your schools.

I know we cannot push a revolution through on half measures. Which is why, when I fought for a new funding settlement, I didn't argue for a one-year deal; I didn't argue for a two-year deal; I argued for a three year deal... And that is what we got.

I am in no doubt that money spent on schools is an investment in all our futures. This is why I have secured the largest cash boost in school funding decade for the core schools budget – an extra £14.4 billion coming through over the next three years.

We have also announced increased funding of £400 million for 16 to 19-year-olds in school sixth forms and colleges for the coming year.

All of this additional investment will lay the foundations for the revolution in support for teachers and leaders that sits at the heart of my vision for schools.

I am determined to support you and your staff, and give you the means to excel over the course of your careers.

I understand that while we may not agree on everything, one thing we do share is our conviction that what will make the biggest difference to a child's education is the person standing at the front of the classroom.

The person that shares their knowledge with the child.

The person who inspires the child to learn.

The person who gives the child the confidence to succeed.

And this is particularly true for those children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds.

That is why we are going to transform the support for school teachers and leaders, from initial teacher training right through to those who are leading our schools.

I can promise three things:

First – that every school teacher is going to get the training and support they need to thrive in this profession, whether they are just starting out or whether they have years of experience behind them.

Second – that my department is going to work with you every step of the way, recognising that the key to improving the quality of teaching is right here in this room and in your schools.

Third – and most importantly – we will target additional investment at schools serving the most disadvantaged communities in this country.

Over the coming months, we are together going to create the development opportunities and career pathways that will make teaching more than a match for other highly regarded professions.

And all of this work will be underpinned by the best available evidence, independently assessed and endorsed by the Education Endowment Foundation.

The Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy we launched last year established a base for these reforms, starting with the Early Career Framework and the new core content framework for Initial Teacher Training.

These reforms, which are backed by at least £130 million a year, mean that from this September, all new entrants to the teaching profession will benefit from a three-year structured package of support at the start of their careers.

The Early Career Framework will be tested early in Greater Manchester, Doncaster, Bradford and the North East this autumn before a national roll out next year.

By the time it is fully up and running, up to 50,000 early career teachers and their mentors will be receiving this additional training at any one time.

That's over 100,000 teachers – almost a quarter of the entire teaching workforce – receiving world-class training and development every year.

We must, however, do more. That is why we are boosting starting salaries, which will rise to £30,000 for new entrants by 2022. And we are targeting interventions to help schools in disadvantaged areas retain their teachers, including through loan reimbursements and retention payments.

And I can promise you we will continue to build on this together. Transforming the support and development available to teachers and leaders is a career-long enterprise.

In particular I'm aware that there is one cohort of teachers who are often overlooked and that's those experienced teachers who don't want to lead their own school and yet deliver excellent teaching year in, year out.

These fantastic teachers need to know that their development and career progression matters just as much as anyone else's.

That is why we are creating a new specialist National Professional Qualification in Teacher Development, for teachers with responsibility for supporting the training and development of others, including early career teachers. And today I can announce that we will launch two further specialist

qualifications. One will be to train and develop teachers who are subject leads or responsible for improving teaching practice in a subject or phase. The other will be for those whose role includes ensuring schools are calm and orderly places, by focusing on behaviour management and pupil wellbeing.

But as you know better than anyone, great school leadership is fundamental to making these reforms work.

Great leaders set a clear vision and ethos for their school, and they create the kind of environments where teachers are able to deliver great teaching.

So we are also reviewing the full current suite of leadership NPQs to make sure they cover the specific knowledge and skills that school leaders need for the future.

And we also know these qualifications can make the most difference for those leaders working in the most challenging schools and some of the most deprived areas. That is why we will provide additional investment, including £15 million in the next financial year, for those areas to access NPQs for free.

We want teachers and leaders to know that if they want the best professional development opportunities, they can find them in Oldham, Knowsley and Teeside, not just in London.

I am glad to say that the group that helped set up the specialist qualifications will be advising us to ensure that there is continuity and coherence and I am especially glad to say that we have managed to persuade Malcom Trobe, who is chairing the Headteachers' Standards review with such distinction, to join us in this work

These measures will create a golden thread running from Initial Teacher Training through to school leadership, rooting teacher and leader development in the best available evidence.

And I know that a world-leading development offer needs bringing to life by the very best practitioners in the profession.

That is why we are creating a world-leading infrastructure to match our reforms. At the heart of the new system will be the Teaching School Hubs.

These will be dedicated centres of excellence for teacher training and development. They will be led by some of the best schools and trusts and will be focused on delivering our new offer to all teachers.

The concentrated focus for Teaching School Hubs on teacher training and development will see a return to the original vision behind teaching schools, recognising teacher and leader development as the most important form of school improvement.

I'd like to move on to one of the main themes of the weekend and that's creating a strong, diverse leadership.

I've talked today about career pathways. And it is vital that we can attract

and retain brilliant, talented teachers from across all groups, all faiths, all races and all genders and support them in their career journeys.

Rachel has just mentioned the work ASCL is doing to make sure our schools and colleges embrace diversity in all its forms and I warmly congratulate everyone involved in this. And encourage them in their work.

Which brings me to another aspect of diversity. The way people live and work is changing. Schools must reflect this, if they are to attract and retain great teachers.

I'd like to thank Geoff at this point because he has been a cheerleader for flexible working for some time.

We can't ease up on this. There are some amazing teachers who have been attracted into the teaching profession purely because they have found a school where they can work part time. The flipside of that will be those who quit because they can't find a school that has the same flexibility

We will be publishing our updated Flexible Working Guidance later in the spring as well as launching a group of Ambassador Schools who will be able to share with others what worked for them.

I said earlier that I am going to stop at nothing to make our schools the best they can possibly be and supporting you throughout your careers is the surest way to achieve that. I believe that the measures and commitments I have set out today will take this profession to new heights.

In particular, by next September, all teachers and leaders will have access to a clear, coherent framework for professional development; one that will support them at every stage of their careers. Every teacher will feel the benefit. But most importantly, those they teach will feel the benefit.

By continuing to improve the wider conditions for you to do your jobs, I know that the teaching community will flourish and the profession will be the rewarding and fulfilling one you so richly deserve.

I could not be more grateful for your leadership and I am so so enormously proud to be your champion in government. And so I look forward to working with you over the coming years to see that change and improvement.

Thank you.

[AAIB Report: Piper PA-46-310P Malibu,](#)

N264DB, 21st January 2019

Today the Air Accidents Investigation Branch (AAIB) publishes its final report into the loss of Piper PA-46-310P Malibu, N264DB, on 21st January 2019.

The investigation established that the aircraft departed from Nantes Airport, France, at 19:06 hrs on 21 January 2019 carrying a passenger on a commercial basis to Cardiff Airport in the UK. At 20:16 hrs, probably while manoeuvring to avoid poor weather, the aircraft was lost from radar and struck the sea 22 nautical miles north-north-west of Guernsey. Neither the pilot nor aircraft had the required licences or permissions to operate commercially.

Safety action has been taken by the Civil Aviation Authority to raise awareness of the risk associated with unlicensed charter flights. Safety action has also been taken by the engine manufacturer to improve the guidance given to personnel undertaking inspections of exhaust systems.

Five Safety Recommendations have been made in this report concerning: the carriage of CO detectors; additional in-service inspections of exhaust systems; and the maintenance of flight crew licensing records.

Crispin Orr, Chief Inspector of Air Accidents, Air Accidents Investigation Branch said: "This was a tragic accident with fatal consequences. As we publish our final report today, our thoughts are with the families of Mr Sala and Mr Ibbotson.

"A team of highly experienced investigators has been working to examine all aspects of the flight in order to understand the factors which may have caused or contributed to the accident. Today we have made important safety recommendations which, if fully implemented, would significantly reduce the risk of a recurrence.

"Routine maintenance is vital but cannot eliminate the risk of carbon monoxide leaks completely. Equipping aircraft with devices that provide warning of the presence of this odourless, colourless and lethal gas, would enable pilots to take potentially lifesaving action. We are therefore calling for the regulators to make it mandatory for piston engine aircraft, such as the one involved in this accident, to carry an active CO warning device.

"The chartering of aircraft that are not licensed for commercial transport – so called 'grey charters' – is putting lives at risk. We welcome the Civil Aviation Authority's efforts to stop this practice through their 'Legal to Fly' campaign and other interventions."

[Read the report](#)

Councils given £1.2 million for innovative digital projects



- Councils to receive a further £1.2 million for digital technology projects
- Work aims to improve public services and value for money
- Builds on £2.5 million already invested in local authority projects through the Local Digital Fund

Six councils across England will receive a share of £1.2 million of government funding to spearhead innovative digital projects to improve public services.

Each council will receive a grant of up to £350,000 to push forward existing projects that will benefit residents by harnessing digital technology to create smarter ways to deliver public services such as housing repairs and the planning process.

These 6 councils will lead the projects while also working in partnership with 14 other councils across the country, bringing together expertise and sharing the results.

This builds on £2.5 million already invested in local authority projects through the Local Digital Fund. A total of 23 projects have been funded since the Fund's launch in 2018, all working to improve the way councils deliver services for residents.

Local Government Minister Simon Clarke MP said:

Digital technology has enormous potential to benefit society and improve our lives in countless ways and I am determined that councils harness its potential too.

That is why I have announced £1.2 million for councils to continue their work on truly innovative projects to improve public services for people across the country.

Councils receiving funding in this round are:

- **Southwark Council** will receive an additional £350,000 to improve the planning application system by developing better ways of recording and using information. The Council has developed a prototype and will now test it with a small group of users. They are working with Hackney Council, the Greater London Authority, and Surrey Heath Borough Council.
- **Lambeth Council** will receive an additional £350,000 to design a system that can filter out incomplete or invalid planning applications. They have developed a prototype and will now test it with users. They are working with Wycombe District Council, Southwark Council, Lewisham Council, and Camden Council.
- The **Royal Borough of Greenwich** will receive an additional £50,000 to develop a better way for residents to report housing repairs online. They have made a prototype and will now test it with users. They are working with the City of Lincoln Council, Southwark Council, and South Kesteven District Council.
- **Buckinghamshire County Council** will receive an additional £250,000 to produce an online directory of support services to make them easier to find. They have developed a prototype and will now test it with users. They are working with Adur and Worthing Council, Croydon Council, and Leeds City Council.
- **Croydon Council** will receive an additional £100,000 to improve how computer code is shared between councils to boost public services. They will develop a prototype and are working with Brighton and Hove City Council, Bracknell Forest Council, and Oxford City Council.
- **Barnsley Metropolitan Council** will receive an additional £100,000 to produce a new digital system to manage council payments that is easier for residents to use and saves time. They will develop a prototype and are working with Dorset County Council and Huntingdonshire District Council.

These projects are part of a drive to improve council services for residents in the future. Work is focused on bringing local authorities together in their research, improving the way they work together to develop tools to benefit everyone.

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