

With today's vote, innocent Syrians can breathe no sigh of relief: UK at Security Council

Thank you, President. And I join others in thanking Norway and Ireland for their work as penholders.

The UK approached this renewal, as we have every year since the mandate was first agreed in 2014, on the basis of humanitarian need, and humanitarian need alone.

Humanitarian need in Syria is the highest it has ever been. 4.1 million people are in need of aid across the north-west, of which 2.4 million are reliant solely on the UN cross-border mechanism for life-saving assistance every single month.

We have heard repeatedly from the UN and from NGOs that a renewal for 12 months was necessary to provide operational certainty so they could prepare to meet that humanitarian need, especially during the harsh months of winter. Last Friday, Russia stopped this from happening.

With today's vote, innocent Syrians can breathe no sigh of relief. The suffering and the uncertainty goes on. Without the confidence of at least 12 months, UN agencies and NGOs risk being caught in a perpetual cycle of pre-positioning and contingency planning.

It is therefore important that we are clear: while this renewal is only for an initial 6-months, the intent of the Council is to renew for a further six months, subject to another resolution.

The Secretary-General's report, requested by this resolution, will be able to set out the implications were this mandate to come to an end in January as winter is setting in.

The humanitarian case for a further renewal will be self-evident, and to oppose it will be to ignore the suffering of 4.1 million people.

The UK will continue to support the UN's efforts to deliver its Humanitarian Response Plan. But we will not consider providing any reconstruction assistance without a credible, substantive and genuine political process firmly underway.

A genuine political process is the only sustainable means of ending suffering in Syria.

Thank you, President.

Statement on Supreme Court

News story

The Advocate General for Scotland has today lodged papers with the Supreme Court in relation to the Lord Advocate's referral of the Scottish Government's draft Scottish Independence Referendum Bill.



A UK Government spokesperson said:

“We have been clear that now is not the time to be discussing another independence referendum, when people across Scotland want both their governments to be working together on the issues that matter to them and their families.

“However, following the Lord Advocate's referral of the Scottish Government's draft Scottish Independence Referendum Bill, the UK Government has today lodged its initial response with the Supreme Court.

“The papers confirm that the Advocate General for Scotland will become a formal party to the case, and ask the Court to consider whether it should accept the Lord Advocate's referral.”

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Teacher assessed grades in 2021 – student and teacher experiences

Two Ofqual reports published today outline student and teacher experiences of

teacher assessed grades (TAGs) in summer 2021.

Summer 2021 exams were cancelled. Students' grades for GCSEs, AS and A levels and many vocational qualifications were based on teacher judgments.

TAGs were based on a range of evidence produced by the students, and only on content they had been taught.

Ofqual conducted [a survey in 2021](#) after TAGs were submitted and before students got their results in August.

A total of 1,785 teaching staff and 550 students completed the survey. [Researchers also interviewed](#) 39 teachers and 14 students to find out more about their experiences and opinions.

Among other findings, the survey showed:

- 57% of students said too much time was spent on assessments
- 4 to 6 pieces of evidence were used
- most assessments were taken under exam-like conditions

Different schools and colleges took different approaches to setting and marking assessments, and deciding on grades. Almost all teachers thought the grades they determined were accurate.

Students who responded expressed concerns about the pressure they felt from the assessment process, and the potential for different schools and colleges to take different approaches.

The majority of teachers who responded told us that the process was often stressful and time-consuming. They had no desire to undertake TAGs in this form again.

Ofqual Chief Regulator Dr Jo Saxton said:

We know from our research that teachers worked incredibly hard to award grades in the exceptional circumstances of summer 2021 and we are grateful to them. TAGs were necessary to allow more than a million students to move on with their lives, but our research highlights the additional burden on teachers and students.

It's great that exams and formal assessments have taken place this year, and again, I would like to thank teachers and pay tribute to the resilience of students.

[Another Ofqual report](#) published today considers statistical alignment between subjects in GCSEs and A levels in 2021 compared with previous years. This work is a follow-up to analysis published in summer 2020.

Last year's TAGs and centre assessment grades (CAGs) in 2020 resulted in higher grades generally. The findings suggest the relative difficulty of

subjects varied a little more between 2021 and 2020 than is typical between normal consecutive years of exams.

Extra support for thousands navigating the legal system

- increased £4 million funding to help vulnerable people in civil and family legal disputes
- focus on early intervention to resolve issues before going to court
- follows proposals that see extra 2 million people eligible for legal aid

Around £4 million will be awarded to charities and organisations providing legal help this financial year – an increase on the £3 million provided in previous years.

The grants will help ensure people can get speedy support to understand how to deal with the legal problems they face.

For people who do go on to represent themselves in civil and family cases, the support will focus on resolving their legal problems at an earlier stage with access to specialist legal guidance in person, by telephone or online, to deal with the problem before it escalates.

Grants will also fund services to help people through the court process, including online guides and in person support on the day of their appearance.

It follows the government's proposals for two million more people to have access to legal aid following changes to the means test. Both income and capital thresholds will be raised, while disputed assets will not count towards an applicant's threshold, benefitting victims of domestic abuse.

Justice Minister Lord Bellamy QC said:

This funding and our wider legal aid reforms will ensure that those who encounter a legal problem will have someone to turn to, regardless of their financial circumstances.

It will help more people resolve issues quickly, away from court, saving them the money and the stress that can be caused.

The Ministry of Justice has provided £21 million to organisations providing legal support for litigants in person since 2015 and research shows that this kind of support helps almost two-thirds of people resolve their problems without going to court.

The department is partnering with the Access to Justice Foundation (ATJF), who will administer the funding, with expressions of interest open to organisations from today.

Joint Chief Executive Officer of the ATJF Clare Carter said:

We're delighted to be working with Ministry of Justice on the new Help Accessing Legal Support grant. The Access to Justice Foundation exists to support organisations helping people most in need address their social welfare legal issues.

This grant will help a wide range of legal support and advice organisations across England and Wales help people resolve their legal issues at the earliest opportunity.

What this means in practice is that more people will be able to get advice online, on the phone or in person which helps them better and understand and resolve their housing, benefits, debt, employment or family issues. In this way, more people will be able to access support at an early stage in the process, before things escalate. We will also be looking to support services which exist to assist people through the court process.

The types of frontline organisations that have benefited from government funding for legal support in the past include an independent advice agency in East London supporting individuals with the required documentation and forms, as well as tribunal and court representation on welfare, housing and debt issues.

Notes to editors

- The Legal Support for Litigants in Person Grant (LSLIP) [interim report](#) has provided solid evidence that providing legal support services helps people to resolve their issue without it progressing to court: 62% of clients resolved their problems with the support of generalised advice, casework and early specialist legal assistance, avoiding the need to go to court.
- You can apply for grants here: [Our Grants – The Access To Justice Foundation \(atjf.org.uk\)](#)
- An example of a person supported through an organisation funded through the AJTF includes Jane (not her real name) from Devon a young mother with two small children and domestic abuse victim living with PTSD and depression.
 - Jane stopped contact between the children and their father over safeguarding concerns including neglect and emotional abuse (continuously shouting and swearing at the children). The father retaliated by filing a Child Arrangements Order application to resume contact.
 - Jane's mental health problems and vulnerability meant she struggled to respond by herself, especially considering that the required

paperwork and documents dealt with a very difficult and troubling time in her life where she was constantly abused and subject to coercive control. Her local free legal advice charity, an Access to Justice Foundation grantee, drafted these documents for her so that she could comply with the court's directions and represent her arguments and concerns effectively.

Poor record keeping means Birmingham charity is unable to fully account for £100,000, inquiry finds

Press release

The Charity Commission has concluded its statutory inquiry into One Community Organisation, finding misconduct and/or mismanagement.



In an official report, the Commission has concluded the trustees of a Birmingham based charity are responsible for misconduct and/or mismanagement, over financial and governance oversights.

One Community Organisation was registered as a charity in 2009 and organises events and education programmes for the deaf/blind and special educational needs community.

The inquiry found that the trustees had agreed that the chair of trustees would make payments on behalf of the charity using his own bank account because the charity didn't have its own bank card. However, the chair would reimburse himself without the supervision or authorisation of another trustee. The trustees' poor record keeping also meant they could not provide the inquiry with supporting documentation for the reimbursement of around £100,000 spent in this way, meaning the inquiry could not conclude that the money was spent solely in furtherance of the charity's objects.

Transactions made by the chair on behalf of the charity using his own bank account were also not included in the charity's accounts for the financial years ending in December 2017 and 2018. This means they understated the charity's income and expenditure by between £70,000 and £80,000 for both years.

The statutory inquiry also found that the trustees lacked a basic understanding of the charity's governing document and their duties as trustees. This resulted in a number of governance failures including the charity operating outside of the geographical area stated on its governing document, not identifying or managing conflicts of interest and making decisions without the required number of trustees.

The regulator issued the trustees with an Action Plan to improve the charity's overall governance and decision-making procedures, including to update the charity's financial controls policy, familiarise themselves with Commission guidance on conflicts of interest and appoint a professional accountant to assist with record keeping and accounting duties. The trustees have since implemented the Action Plan.

Amy Spiller, Head of Investigations at the Commission, said:

The trustees' failures in this case resulted in significant amounts of charity money being unaccounted for. This is unacceptable and amounts to misconduct and/or mismanagement.

I hope that the Commission's intervention in this case means the charity is now able to deliver on its charitable purposes and improve the lives of the people it was set up to support.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

1. The Charity Commission is the independent, non-ministerial government department that registers and regulates charities in England and Wales. Its purpose is to ensure charity can thrive and inspire trust so that people can improve lives and strengthen society.
2. The Commission opened the inquiry on 01 December 2020. View the full [inquiry report](#).

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