



60th
Anniversary
1965-2025



***Over half a century of legal expertise and
cutting-edge law reform***

Independence | Expertise | Integrity

Who are we?



- We are a small, trusted, independent body of legal policy experts chaired by a senior judge. We were created under the Law Commissions Act 1965.
- Our lawyers and researchers focus on distinct areas of the law, each led by a Commissioner who is an experienced judge, barrister, solicitor or teacher of law.
- Each of our four teams covers the following areas: Criminal, Property, Family and Trust, Public and Wales, and Commercial and Common Law
- We also have a small corporate function to ensure we work efficiently and effectively in meeting our statutory purpose. We have a board with three non-executive members which is responsible for the strategic governance of the Commission.
- We operate as a non-departmental public body of the Ministry of Justice, but we take on projects across the UK Government and Welsh Government and work closely with our Scottish counterpart.

What do we do?

- **We keep the law of England and Wales under review and make recommendations for development and reform where needed.**
- **Expertise, independence, delivery:** We are a world leader in law reform. We carry out projects to ensure that the law and policy in a particular area is as fair, modern, simple and cost-effective as possible. We do this through intensive research, analysis and extensive consultation, and produce comprehensive recommendations for Government and Parliament.
- **We have legal and policy expertise in a vast range of areas otherwise not available to Whitehall.** Our Commissioners are outstanding in their fields, our legal staff have expertise in law reform, and we have Parliamentary Counsel based in-house. Our reputation and independence mean people trust us, allowing us to carry out in-depth, high-quality consultations and build consensus around proposals.
- **We can consider large and complex legal issues.** We address Government's priority projects and work to ambitious timetables keeping department officials regularly updated. Our recommendations to the Government are fully developed and, where appropriate, accompanied by draft legislation. We also frequently support the Government in taking draft legislation based on our recommendations through Parliament. A dedicated parliamentary procedure also exists to implement uncontroversial Law Commission bills.

Why law reform?

- **Sometimes, the law is too complex and out of date – it needs to be simplified and modernised.** Our work on insurance contract law, culminated in two statutes to reform the existing outdated law from 1906 to meet the legitimate expectations of modern consumers and businesses.
- **Sometimes, the law has not kept pace with social attitudes and needs a fresh approach to balance competing rights.** Our Weddings project would allow couples to have greater choice on how and where their wedding is conducted. Our Cohabitation project made the case for giving greater protection to cohabiting couples. This would help avoid financial hardship suffered by cohabitants or their children on the ending of their relationship by separation or death. In two of our recent projects - on intimate image abuse, and communications offences – we made recommendations that would ensure the criminal law reflects modern methods

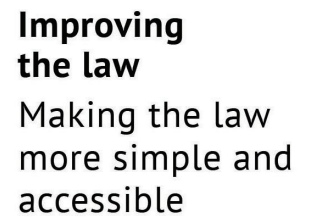
and attitudes to online communications. Many of these recommendations were implemented in the Online Safety Act 2023.

- **Sometimes, new technologies emerge and need a comprehensive legal framework to be developed.** Our Automated Vehicles project shows how to achieve the safe and responsible introduction of automated vehicles on British roads and in public places, culminating in the Automated Vehicles Act 2024.





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Unlocking growth

Digitising of trade documents boosts the economy by £25bn

We drive legal reforms to ensure the laws of England and Wales are fair, simple, modern and cost-effective

Projects proposed by government, public, or internally

Plan, consult, and
refine with input
from the public



Improving access to the law

Securing fair access to social care for disabled children

Updating laws to benefit society

Giving choice in a simple framework to support and celebrate marriage

Good legislation

establishes a foundation for social wellbeing and economic growth

Foster growth and innovation

Enable social wellbeing

Improve access to justice

Bringing ancient laws into line with modern needs

Updating rules on burial, cremation and new funerary methods

Recommendations

Over 250 reports

2/3

of reports implemented in whole or in part



Publishing reports and draft legislation

Supporting progress through Parliament

Children Act 1989

Mental Capacity Act 2005

Land Registration Act 2002

Arbitration Act 2025

Sentencing Act 2020



What benefits does law reform deliver?

- **We support economic growth:** In 2020, independent economists predicted the economic gains from the Law Commission's five highest-value most recent projects would exceed more than £3 billion over ten years. The International Chamber of Commerce estimated that modernising laws in order to digitise certain trade documents could generate £25 billion in new economic growth by 2024, and free up £224 billion in efficiency savings.
- **We deliver significant social value:** Good law reform positively impacts significant numbers of people. Our projects on Weddings and on Hate Crime indicated a potential positive impact on 5.3 million people. Our work on Automated Vehicles could positively impact 78 per cent of households.
- **We create legal certainty:** This means that England and Wales remains a world-leading jurisdiction which attracts investment.
- **We deliver value for money:** Data for the two-year period 2022/2023 estimates for every £1 invested in the Law Commission's running costs, £16 of financial and social return would be delivered if our recommendations were implemented in full.



How do we decide what to work on?

- **We consult widely and regularly:** Before making any recommendations to change the law, we publish a consultation paper setting out the issues and possible solutions. Our consultations are wide-ranging, seeking views from the public, legal professionals, academics and interest groups. For our 13th programme consultation, we received over 1300 responses.
- **Projects are scoped and agreed with the Government of the day:** The bulk of our work is agreed with Government Ministers where we agree Terms of References.
- **Work can be incorporated into a “programme of law reform”:** A large package of measures across several areas of law, which we will deliver over a three to five year period. Our 14th programme has recently been published.

Or they can be one-off projects referred to us by Government, known as “Ministerial references”.

- **We are the Law Commission of England AND of Wales:** In recent years we have designed an up-to-date system for ensuring the safety of Wales’s coal tips and a new legal structure for Welsh devolved tribunals.



What else do we do?

- We have expertise in complex technical reform such as consolidation (drawing together multiple pieces of legislation in a particular field and making the law simpler and easier to access).
- We advise the Government on complex areas of law that may need explanation rather than reform. For example, our work on smart contracts concluded that the current legal framework in England and Wales can facilitate and support the use of smart legal contracts without the need for law reform and includes guidance for users and the judiciary.
- We are also heavily in demand with overseas governments and law reform agencies. We provide advice and training on individual law reform issues as well as best practice in law reform generally.
- Our strong international reputation as a leading law reform agency helps us promote the UK by assisting overseas jurisdictions considering establishing a law reform agency. Our international work also links us to established networks of law reform experts ensuring our finger is on the pulse of global legal developments. For example, our work on digital assets was cited by a New York court in a 2022 bankruptcy case. And our work on surrogacy, was heavily cited by the New Zealand Law Commission in their review of the law.
- We improve understanding of law reform through publications like *Inside Modern Law Reform* and *The Value of Law Reform*, and giving evidence to Parliament and the Senedd.

Our work in action

Over the past six decades, the work of the Law Commission has directly or indirectly led to significant changes in the law and policy which affect the people of England and Wales. These are just some of the examples.

1989

Children Act: Reformed existing laws to prioritise the best interests of the child as the paramount consideration in any decision or action related to their upbringing.

1996

Family Law Act: Helped victims of domestic abuse to remain safely in their own homes.

2002

Land Registration Act: Provided the legal framework for registering land and certainty about who owns what land.

2005

Mental Capacity Act: Provided a legal framework for making decisions on behalf of people lacking capacity.

2006

Fraud Act: Simplified the law by repealing some offences and abolishing the common law crime of conspiracy to defraud.

2007

Serious Crime Act: Reformed the law governing the criminal liability of those who encourage or assist others to commit offences.

2009

Coroners and Justice Act: Improved partial defences to murder of loss of control and diminished responsibility.

2010

Bribery Act: Made tackling corruption more efficient and effective.

2014

Care Act: Introduced duties to support the old and disabled and provided protection against abuse.

2015

Consumer Rights Act: Consolidated and extended unfair terms in consumer contracts.

2020

Sentencing Act: Brought together existing sentencing procedure legislation into a single Sentencing Code that makes the law more accessible for the public, the judiciary and practitioners.

2023

Electronic Trade Documents Act: Allowed for the legal recognition of trade documents used widely in international trade, such as bills of lading and bills of exchange in electronic form, potentially replacing billions of paper documents per year.

2025

Arbitration Act: Modernises arbitration law ensuring Britain's position as the best place to resolve disputes without having to go to court.

What are we working on right now?

- You can view a list of our current projects on our website at:
<https://lawcom.gov.uk/current-projects/>
- Further details:
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