

Press release: New changes to encourage small businesses to apply for government contracts

Today the government will launch a package of tough new measures designed to level the playing field for smaller businesses bidding to win government contracts.

Cabinet Office Minister Oliver Dowden will announce proposals to exclude suppliers from major government procurements if they cannot demonstrate fair and effective payment practices with their subcontractors. Other plans include allowing subcontractors to have greater access to buying authorities to report poor payment performance, signalling the government's commitment to improving payment practice in the UK.

Further requirements mean suppliers will have to advertise subcontracting opportunities via the [Contracts Finder website](#), and to provide the government with data showing how businesses in their supply chain, including small businesses, are benefiting from supplying to central government.

The Prime Minister has also today written to members of her Cabinet to nominate a Small Business Champion minister in each department to ensure that small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are given a fair opportunity.

This package of measures is designed to ensure that more businesses – including smaller firms – will be able to supply goods and services to the public sector, while also making public procurement more transparent.

In the most recent figures from 2015/16, government spent £5.6 billion directly with small businesses. Indeed, when sub-contracts to small businesses from larger suppliers was taken into account, total spend rose to £12.2 billion.

Oliver Dowden, Minister for Implementation, said:

This government is listening to the business community and is committed to levelling the playing field for smaller suppliers to win work in the public sector.

We have set a challenging aspiration that 33% of procurement spend should be with small businesses by 2022 – and are doing more than ever to break down barriers for smaller firms.

Small businesses are the backbone of the UK economy, and play a key role in helping us to build a strong, viable private sector that delivers value for taxpayers and jobs for millions all over the UK.

Emma Jones, the Government's Crown Representative for Small Business, said:

Securing a government contract is a great way for small firms to bring in a steady income stream that can really help their business to grow. These measures demonstrate the government's clear commitment to small business, ensuring they can easily find and access new opportunities to supply to government.

Oliver Dowden has discussed the plans during a round table event in March, attended by the Federation of Small Businesses, the Confederation of British Industry, and industry bodies representing social enterprises, entrepreneurs, and Chambers of Commerce.

It is estimated that this group of organisations represents more than 2 million small businesses across the UK.

Federation of Small Businesses National Chairman, Mike Cherry, said:

Each year, the UK public sector spends over £200 billion on goods and services from third parties. As such a large and prominent customer in the economy, the government has a pivotal role to play in demonstrating what it is to be a good client.

It is right then that the government today announces, as part of a new package to boost SME procurement, that it will clamp down on poor payment practice throughout public procurement supply chains. Companies who pay late should not be rewarded with public sector contracts. We need a robust public procurement process that holds larger companies to account for their payment practices.

To coincide with the launch, the minister will today also be visiting two small businesses in the north-west who both supply services to the government.

[Press release: Four-time bankrupt hit with fourteen-year restriction](#)

The ban, from 7 February 2018 to 6 February 2032, one year short of the maximum, follows an investigation into the affairs of Fintan Noel Arrowsmith.

During the period 2010 to 2017, Fintan Arrowsmith had traded as a horticulturist but ceased trading in April 2017 after the failure of his crop.

He stated his liabilities mostly related to stock obtained on credit from suppliers and on 18 October 2017, Fintan Arrowsmith filed on his own bankruptcy petition, listing a deficiency of £39,374.

Fintan Arrowsmith was interviewed by the Official Receiver at which time he stated that he had traded as F Arrowsmith, Glebe Farm Nursery during the period 2010 to April 2017.

He further explained that in 2016 he had a significant loss of his perishable stock, which were uninsured as no underwriter was willing to insure him because of his bankruptcy history

The Insolvency Service investigation into his affairs confirmed that Fintan Arrowsmith had signed a Bankruptcy Restrictions Undertaking (BRU) on 17 November 2009, which was accepted by the Secretary of State and was effective for 11 years to November 2020.

This meant that Fintan Arrowsmith had defied his bankruptcy restrictions and obtained a variety of stock and supplies, to the value of at least £24,549, from trade creditors on cash-on-delivery and credit terms.

The Official Receiver made enquiries with these trade creditors, all of whom confirmed Fintan Arrowsmith had not disclosed that he had been made bankrupt before obtaining credit and that they would not have extended credit to Mr Arrowsmith had they been aware of this.

On 7 February 2018, a bankruptcy restrictions order (BRO) was made by the court, as directed by the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, against Mr Arrowsmith (47), ordering him to be bound for 14 years, by the restrictions set out in insolvency law that a bankrupt is subject to until they are discharged from bankruptcy – normally 12 months – until 2032.

Gerard O'Hare, an Official Receiver at the Insolvency Service, said:

Where a bankrupt has acted contrary to restrictions placed upon him by insolvency law, by obtaining credit with fully disclosing his states, he should not expect to do so without consequences, particularly when others suffer financial loss as a result.

A bankruptcy restriction in these circumstances will serve to provide creditors with a degree of protection, and it will also act as a deterrent to the bankrupt not to act in a similar manner in the future.

Mr Fintan Noel Arrowsmith is of Sleaford and his date of birth is December 1970. The Bankruptcy Order was made against him on 19 October 2017 on his own petition.

Mr Arrowsmith's bankruptcies were:

- In 2003 – as Fintan Mahgabhan
- In 2005 – as Fintan Noel Mahgabhan-Arrowsmith
- In 2008 – as Fintan Noel Arrowsmith
- In 2017 – as Fintan Noel Arrowsmith

If the Official Receiver considers that the conduct of a bankrupt has been dishonest or blameworthy in some other way, he (or she) will report the facts to court and ask for a Bankruptcy Restrictions Order (BRO) to be made. The court will consider this report and any other evidence put before it, and will decide whether it should make a BRO. If it does, the bankrupt will be subject to certain restrictions for the period stated in the order. This can be from 2 to 15 years.

The bankrupt may instead agree to a Bankruptcy Restrictions Undertaking (BRU) which has the same effect as an order, but will mean that the matter does not go to court.

These are restrictions set out in insolvency law that the bankrupt is subject to until they are discharged from bankruptcy – normally 12 months and include that bankrupts:

- must disclose their status to a credit provider if they wish to get credit of more than £500
- who carry on business in a different name from the name in which they were made bankrupt, they must disclose to those they wish to do business with the name (or trading style) under which they were made bankrupt
- may not act as the director of a company nor take part in its promotion, formation or management unless they have a court's permission to do so
- may not act as an insolvency practitioner, or as the receiver or manager of the property of a company on behalf of debenture holders

The Insolvency Service, an executive agency sponsored by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), administers the insolvency regime, and aims to deliver and promote a range of investigation and enforcement activities both civil and criminal in nature, to support fair and open markets. We do this by effectively enforcing the statutory company and insolvency regimes, maintaining public confidence in those regimes and reducing the harm caused to victims of fraudulent activity and to the business community, including dealing with the disqualification of directors in corporate failures.

BEIS' mission is to build a dynamic and competitive UK economy that works for all, in particular by creating the conditions for business success and promoting an open global economy. The Criminal Investigations and Prosecutions team contributes to this aim by taking action to deter fraud and to regulate the market. They investigate and prosecute a range of offences, primarily relating to personal or company insolvencies.

The agency also authorises and regulates the insolvency profession, assesses and pays statutory entitlement to redundancy payments when an employer cannot

or will not pay employees, provides banking and investment services for bankruptcy and liquidation estate funds and advises ministers and other government departments on insolvency law and practice.

Further information about the work of the Insolvency Service, and how to complain about financial misconduct, is [available](#).

Media enquiries for this press release – 020 7637 6498 or 020 7596 6187

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on:

[Press release: Ban on live animal exports for slaughter explored by government](#)

[A call for evidence for a potential ban on the live export of animals for slaughter after Brexit](#) has been launched by Environment Secretary Michael Gove. It will also look at higher welfare standards for live animal movements.

Taking action on live animal exports forms part of the government's programme of reforms to cement our position as a global leader in animal welfare as we leave the EU and deliver a Green Brexit.

[The Farm Animal Welfare Committee](#) has also launched a review into the existing welfare standards for animals during transport, and this is being complemented by research commissioned by Defra from [Scotland's Rural College](#) and [the University of Edinburgh](#).

Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

We have some of the highest animal welfare standards in the world which we are strengthening further by raising maximum sentences for animal cruelty to five years and introducing mandatory CCTV in abattoirs.

All animals deserve to get the respect and care they deserve at every stage of their lives. This call for evidence begins to deliver on our manifesto commitment which aims to control the export of live animals for slaughter once we leave the European Union.

With all options being considered, I am keen to hear from industry, the devolved authorities and charities on all possible options and evidence on this vital issue.

The call for evidence, which will last for six weeks, seeks views from across industry, devolved authorities, charities and the general public on how the government might raise standards of animal welfare during transport after the UK leaves the EU. All options for future improvements in this area are being considered, including a potential ban on the live export of animals for slaughter.

Latest figures, from 2016, show that each year over four thousand sheep are transported from the UK to continental Europe for slaughter.

British Veterinary Association President John Fishwick said:

“BVA welcomes the launch of the government’s call for evidence on live animal exports. We believe that production animals should not be transported long distances to the abattoir but should be slaughtered as near to the point of production as possible. Animals should be transported on the hook, as meat, not on the hoof, as live animals.

“It is vital that we maintain the UK’s current high standards of animal welfare post-Brexit and seek opportunities to improve them. We look forward to contributing to this call and seeing the results once the evidence has been collected.”

This announcement builds on a wide range of animal welfare reforms announced by the government, including:

We will discuss the evidence and any future proposals with the Devolved Administrations.

Notes to Editors:

- The Government’s full manifesto commitment in this area is “as we leave the European Union, we can take early steps to control the export of live farm animals for slaughter.”

[Press release: Minister for Asia and the Pacific arrives in Kuala Lumpur](#)

During his one-day visit, Minister Field will have an audience with the Sultan of Perak, HRH Sultan Nazrin Shah, to discuss interfaith dialogue and tackling the illegal wildlife trade.

The Minister will meet with the Governor of the Central Bank of Malaysia, Tan Sri Muhammad bin Ibrahim, as well as prominent business leader and the Chairman of the CIMB Group, Dato' Seri Mohamed Nazir.

He will also meet senior representatives from leading UK companies in Malaysia to discuss strengthening trade and investment ties between the two countries.

Minister Field said:

The historic relationship between the UK and Malaysia is today one of modern partnership, particularly in the areas of prosperity and security.

Building on this strong foundation, I am confident that both our countries will be able to increase this collaboration, for instance on trade and investment, education, defence and security, research and innovation. We will continue to work together to tackle some of today's biggest global challenges such as climate change, the illegal wildlife trade, counter-terrorism and extremism.

Further information

[News story: Funding boost for the arts to support talented pupils](#)

New funding to support talented music, drama and dance pupils to realise their potential and kick-start a career in the arts has been announced by the School Standards Minister Nick Gibb today (Tuesday 10 April). This is a further boost to the arts, which has already seen substantial investment in music hubs for the next two years.

Music, art and design, drama and dance are included in the national curriculum and compulsory in all maintained schools from the age of 5 to 14. The additional £96m takes the total level of support for music and arts programmes to £496 million since 2016. Many recipients of these funds have moved on to successful careers in the arts.

Award-winning actor and star of the Crown, Claire Foy said:

Without a Dance and Drama Award I would not have been able to train at The Oxford School of Drama. This scheme is vital in providing scholarships for a wide diversity of students to train at outstanding independent vocational schools.

The money will give pupils across the country access to a range of cultural opportunities including:

- Training at the world-famous Royal Ballet School in London;
- Film-making classes at the BFI Film Academy;
- Free opportunities to study art and design at their local college or university; and
- Visits to museums and galleries, using quality resources to support their classroom teaching.

The arts play an important part in the broad and balanced curriculum on offer for pupils, with almost half of all pupils choosing to take at least one arts GCSE last year through subjects such as music, dance, drama or art and design.

School Standards Minister Nick Gibb said:

The UK has a strong cultural heritage. We have always nurtured creative talent in this country and have a rich history of world famous musicians, actors and dancers.

For many, this journey starts at school, which is why it is important we support them from the beginning.

This funding will give more young people the opportunity to develop their talents and help world-famous institutions discover the next generation's Billy Elliot.

Arts subjects are an important part of our broad and balanced curriculum, and thanks to our reforms and the hard work of teachers, academic standards are rising with 1.9 million more children in good or outstanding schools than in 2010.

Arts Minister Michael Ellis said:

Our cultural and creative industries are a vital part of the economy and will play an increasingly important role as we build a Britain fit for the future. This £96 million investment will help young people across the country fulfil their artistic potential in our world-leading cultural and creative sectors.

Richard Russell, Chief Operating Officer, Arts Council England said:

We welcome this announcement of additional funding from the Department for Education, giving more pupils the opportunity to engage in cultural activities in and out of school and supporting the Arts Council's ambition of ensuring high quality cultural education exists for a broad and diverse range of young people.

Projects such as National Youth Dance Company, National Art and Design Saturday Clubs, and Museums and Schools Programme create fantastic opportunities for children from a diverse range of backgrounds to participate in a range of different activities, and allow them to discover and develop their talents.

Almost £90 million of combined funding will go to the Music and Dance Scheme (MDS) and the Dance and Drama Awards (DaDa). These funds support the most talented pupils to attend prestigious arts institutions, such as the Royal Ballet School in London and Chetham's School of Music in Manchester.

Today, we are also announcing over £8 million to support a number of cultural education programmes. These give young people the chance to try their hand at film making with the British Film Institute, improve their skills with the National Youth Dance Company and explore different art materials at National Art and Design Saturday Clubs. This funding also gives pupils the chance to learn about the country's most famous historical sites with Historic England.

There is also a further boost for the 'In Harmony' projects in Liverpool, Lambeth, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Nottingham, Leeds, Telford and Wrekin/Stoke-on-Trent. All will receive a share of £1 million to help them to continue to provide music education for disadvantaged pupils in their area. These projects aim to inspire and transform the lives of children and families in deprived communities through the power and discipline of ensemble music making.

This funding is in addition to the £150 million already announced for Music Education Hubs in 2018-20 which will help them to support pupils to explore music and give them the opportunity to excel, regardless of their background. There are 120 Music Education Hubs around the country which have already helped over 660,000 young people to play a musical instrument.