

Press release: Government actions a further step in homeless prevention

New guidance to make sure local authorities intervene earlier to help prevent families and individuals becoming homeless in the first place has been published today (16 October 2017).

The guidance, which is subject to an [8-week consultation](#), sets out how local councils should implement the [Homelessness Reduction Act](#), due to come into effect in April 2018. The new Act requires councils to provide services to all at risk of becoming homeless, on top of those with a priority need such as families with children and those who are vulnerable.

Following further discussions with local authorities in England on the resources required to implement the Act, the government is providing an additional £11.7 million in new burdens funding to local authorities, taking the total amount to £72.7 million. This additional funding will be shared among local authorities over 2 years to meet the requirements of the Act.

The government will also be providing a share of £3 million to local authorities to support them in upgrading their data systems to allow them to assess how the Act is changing homeless prevention in their areas. This comes on top of the government's investment of £550 million until 2020 for homelessness and rough sleeping.

Minister for Homelessness Marcus Jones said:

Tackling homelessness and rough sleeping are complex issues with no single solution, but this government is determined to help the most vulnerable in society. That's why we're implementing the most ambitious legislative reform in decades, the Homelessness Reduction Act.

Local authorities play a vital role in implementing the Act. Therefore the guidance and government funding will support them in making sure people will get the help they need earlier to prevent them becoming homeless in the first place.

The consultation asks for views on the guidance for local councils as they prepare to undertake their new duties under the Act, including:

- Making information and advice about homelessness available to all residents free of charge. This includes advice on preventing homelessness and securing accommodation, as well as rights under the Act, and how to access help.
- Tailoring advice to meet the particular needs of vulnerable groups, including victims of domestic abuse and young adults leaving care.
- Working collaboratively with people who are homeless or threatened with

homelessness, to agree a personalised housing plan based on their needs and circumstances. The plan will set out the 'reasonable steps' the local authority and the customer will take to prevent homelessness or help to secure alternative housing.

- Providing help to prevent and relieve homelessness for all eligible applicants, including single people who do not have 'priority need', and those who might be considered 'intentionally homeless'.
- Securing and helping to secure suitable safe accommodation for people who are homeless, or helping them to stay in their current home wherever possible and appropriate.

The [8-week consultation](#) closes on 11 December 2017.

The Homelessness Code of Guidance has been drafted with the assistance of a working group of local authorities and other stakeholders, and the final version will be published in the spring 2018.

The government is also continuing to fund free training through the [National Housing Advisory Service](#), a partnership between Shelter and Citizens Advice, for local authority staff on the Homelessness Reduction Act up until April 2018.

[Press release: Check your oil tanks for winter](#)

The Environment Agency is urging people to check their storage tanks for leaks to protect the environment and reduce the risk of potentially large financial losses.

With winter approaching, many households – particularly in rural areas – will soon be getting oil delivered.

Leaked oil can end up in drains, many of which lead directly to rivers, streams, lakes and even garden ponds, having the same effect as pouring it directly into the watercourse.

Oil is poisonous to fish and other wildlife and smothers plants – just two litres of oil could seriously pollute the volume of fresh water needed to fill an Olympic-sized swimming pool.

Neil Paisley, from the Environment Agency's Environmental Management team, said:

Heating oil can cause serious problems if it gets into the environment. But it's not just the cost of losing the oil that can

be expensive, clean-up costs can be large and are not always covered by household insurance policies.

This is why it is vital that oil is only ever stored in tanks that are in good condition. Both the tank and pipe work should be regularly inspected and people should never buy more oil than they can safely store.

Householders with domestic oil tanks should take the following action to ensure they are safe for use:

- Site tanks as far away as possible from drains, streams and ponds.
- Inspect tanks, pipes and other equipment for leaks, damage and interference once a week. Any problems should be fixed as soon as possible by an Oil Firing Technical Association (OFTEC) technician www.oftec.org.uk.
- Arrange for the boiler and tank to be serviced at least once a year by an OFTEC technician. This should include any underground pipe work.
- Monitor how much oil you use. If the volume of oil being used suddenly increases, there could be a leak.
- Supervise oil deliveries. Never allow your tank to be overfilled and don't order more oil than you can safely store.
- Check your home insurance covers clean-up costs on both your property and neighbouring land. Always notify insurers immediately in the event of a spill or suspected spill.
- If a tank starts leaking, you should try to stop the oil soaking into the ground or going down drains. Contact your insurance company to arrange for an OFTEC technician or UKSpill accredited clean-up company <http://www.ukspill.org> to attend.
- Secondary containment, such as a bund, will prevent oil from escaping into the environment if a leak occurs. This is a legal requirement for domestic tanks which store more than 3,500 litres.

To report an oil spill or leak, contact the Environment Agency's 24-hour emergency hotline on 0800 807060.

Press release: Progress made at EU talks with devolved governments

Agreement has been reached between the UK Government and the devolved administrations on the principles that will underpin the process for bringing back powers from the EU to the UK.

The agreement came at a Joint Ministerial Committee (EN) in London today chaired by the First Secretary of State Damian Green MP with the Scottish and Welsh Governments. A representative from the Northern Ireland civil service also attended.

The First Secretary of State Damian Green said:

Following a set of constructive discussions with the Scottish and Welsh Governments, we have today agreed a set of principles that will underpin the process of repatriating EU powers.

On the day when the UK leaves the EU, all parts of the UK need to be ready. It is the government's intention that the EU Withdrawal Bill will ensure a strong UK internal market, while safeguarding and adding to the decision-making powers of the devolved administrations.

These principles will hopefully now pave the way to agreeing a set of frameworks that will deliver vital certainty and continuity for people and businesses across the United Kingdom.

Note to editors

The communique from the meeting can be found [here](#)

Press release: Furniture director shelved with a 6 year ban

Rebecca Dale-Essex, of London, knowingly removed the money over a 24 day period prior to the company going into liquidation. She was the sole director of Belle Maison Direct Limited, which sold children's furniture until it went into liquidation on 20 April 2016.

£42,000 of the amount removed came after she had informed the local council that her company had insufficient funds to make payments in respect of outstanding business rates. In total, she left creditors, including the council, out of pocket by £140,314.

She provided a disqualification undertaking to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy which prevents her from directly or indirectly becoming involved in the promotion, formation or management of a company for six years.

Commenting on the disqualification, Martin Gitner, Deputy Chief Investigator of Insolvent Investigations, Midlands and West at the Insolvency Service, said:

Rebecca Dale-Essex deliberately removed significant amounts of cash from the company that was for her own benefit, leaving little, if anything, for the creditors of her company.

Company directors should note that the Insolvency Service will investigate and remove them from the business environment if they have acted to the detriment of the company creditors.

Rebecca Dale-Essex's date of birth is September 1971 and she resides in London; She was appointed as a director on 28 January 2009.

Belle Maison Direct Limited (Company number 06804657) was incorporated on 28 January 2009 and was placed into Creditors voluntary liquidation on 20 April 2016.

On 7 September 2017, the Secretary of State accepted a Disqualification Undertaking from Dale-Essex for 6 years, from 28 September 2017.

The matters of unfitness, which she did not dispute in the Disqualification Undertaking, were that:

- Between 19 June 2015 and 13 July 2015, despite knowing the amounts due in respect of Business Rates, she caused BMD to enter into transactions to the detriment of the company and its creditors totalling of £121,500, which worsened its insolvent position. These monies were funds held in BMD's bank accounts, which she transferred to herself.
- Further, £42,000 of these funds were transferred between 7 July 2015 and 13 July 2015, after she had emailed the Council advising BMD had insufficient funds to maintain repayments to a historic balance outstanding in respect of Business Rates on 7 July 2015.

A disqualification order has the effect that without specific permission of a

court, a person with a disqualification cannot:

- act as a director of a company
- take part, directly or indirectly, in the promotion, formation or management of a company or limited liability partnership
- be a receiver of a company's property

Disqualification undertakings are the administrative equivalent of a disqualification order but do not involve court proceedings. Persons subject to a disqualification order are bound by a [range of other restrictions](#).

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](#).

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on:

[Press release: Foreign Office Minister visits Riyadh](#)

Minister for the Middle East Alistair Burt visited Riyadh for bilateral meetings with the Governments of Saudi Arabia and Yemen (Sunday 15 October 2017).

In meetings during the visit, including with Foreign Minister Al Jubeir, Mr Burt highlighted common UK-Gulf security interests and discussed a range of issues. These included UK support for Vision 2030, the need to redouble efforts to end the war in Yemen, and the tensions with Qatar.

Mr Burt discussed the dire humanitarian and economic situation in Yemen with President Hadi and Foreign Minister Mekhlafi.

Speaking after his visit to Riyadh, Minister Burt said:

Saudi Arabia is one of our strongest regional allies and we continue to work closely together in a range of important areas. We support the delivery of Saudi Arabia's ambitious reform programme, Vision 2030, and the need to resolve the ongoing dispute with Qatar.

Central to all of my meetings was the ongoing conflict in Yemen. I made clear my concern that this conflict was now contributing to the largest humanitarian crisis in the world, and that the longer it continued the worse the situation would get. I also stressed the importance of keeping space open for the humanitarian community. Everyone agrees that urgent steps must be taken to make progress towards a political solution. The UK is playing a central role in these efforts and I call upon all parties to the conflict to show the flexibility required to keep the political process moving.

Further information