

Civil news: tender opportunity for HPCDS

News story

A tender has opened on 16 December for the delivery of the Housing Possession Court Duty Scheme in Leeds.



A tender for the Housing Possession Court Duty Scheme (HPCDS) to be delivered in Leeds opened on 16 December and will close at 5pm 19 January 2021.

This opportunity is open to all 2018 Standard Civil Contract holders currently delivering housing and debt services.

Length of contracts

The contract will be offered from 1 March 2021 until 30 September 2021, subject to the Legal Aid Agency's (LAA) right to extend for up to a further 12 months.

How do I tender?

Tenders must be submitted using the LAA's e-Tendering system.

Tender deadline

The tender opens on 16 December 2020 and closes at 5pm on 19 January 2021.

Further information

[Civil tender activity 2020](#) – to find out more and download the Information For Applicants document

[e-Tendering system](#) – to submit your tender

ESFA Update: 16 December 2020

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Last updated 17 December 2020 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 17 December 2020

We have added information on the staggered rollout of coronavirus testing for secondary schools and colleges, announced by the Department for Education today.

2. 16 December 2020

First published.

UK and US sign Customs agreement to ensure continued smooth trade

News story

Businesses trading with the United States will be able to continue to trade smoothly following EU exit, after the UK and US governments agreed a deal to continue Customs cooperation.



The bilateral Customs Assistance Agreement was signed by the Financial Secretary to the Treasury Jesse Norman and US Ambassador Robert Wood Johnson today at a signing ceremony at the US embassy in London.

The agreement will allow customs authorities to continue to cooperate,

including sharing data, to tackle customs fraud, maintaining the current strong relationship between US and UK Customs authorities.

Financial Secretary to the Treasury Jesse Norman said:

This is an important agreement that ensures continuity post EU exit, and demonstrates the strength of the US-UK customs relationship.

This deal will allow us to continue to cooperate in combatting customs offences by sharing information and good practice, and provides the legal underpinning for schemes to ease trade flows for importers and exporters.

US Ambassador Robert Wood Johnson said:

Every single day, the U.S. and the UK work side by side to stop criminals trafficking illegal goods across the Atlantic – from guns, to drugs, to illegal wildlife products and even counterfeit medicine.

This Customs Mutual Assistance Agreement means that after Brexit, our investigators can keep sharing information to stop criminals in their tracks and keep people in both our countries safe.

It will also provide the legal basis for the Authorised Economic Operator Mutual Recognition Arrangement, which will ensure that people and businesses will continue to benefit at their respective borders.

The Authorised Economic Operator scheme is an internationally recognised quality mark allowing a business customs benefits at the border, in recognition that its role in the international supply chain is secure and that it meets international standards on customs control procedures.

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[Community testing offer rolled out to highest risk Tier 2 areas](#)

- Community testing programmes will be offered to worst-affected Tier 2 areas, in addition to Tier 3 areas
- Rapid, regular testing will help drive down transmission rates to help

- prevent areas in Tier 2 moving into the toughest restrictions
- London is the latest local authority confirmed to receive enhanced community testing support

Local authorities in the worst-affected Tier 2 areas, will now be offered community testing in addition to Tier 3 areas, the government has announced today.

Building on the existing rollout of rapid testing to all Directors of Public Health, local authorities who are deemed at high risk of entering Tier 3 will be invited to submit community testing proposals to help drive down transmission rates based on their in-depth knowledge of their local community.

With around 1 in 3 individuals with COVID-19 not displaying symptoms and potentially infecting people unknowingly, broadening testing to identify those showing no symptoms will enable positive cases to be found more quickly and help break chains of transmission.

Tier 3 areas will continue to be prioritised for community testing, with 67 local authorities in Tier 3 having already signed up to the first wave of the enhanced testing support programme, with more roll outs expected in the new year. More than 1.5 million tests have already been deployed to Tier 3 local authorities to start community testing, with testing in Warwickshire, Darlington and Medway already underway.

Following yesterday's announcement of London moving into Tier 3, community testing initiatives have been rapidly approved for all boroughs to start from next week, to help stop the spread of the virus.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

We are expanding the community testing offer to Tier 2 areas at significant risk of moving into Tier 3. Community testing can help drive down transmission rates in areas subject to the toughest restrictions, and now these testing programmes can also play a role in preventing areas from moving into Tier 3.

As many as 1 in 3 people who have the virus don't show symptoms and could be spreading the disease without knowing it. Broadening testing to identify those showing no symptoms will mean finding positive cases more quickly, and help save lives.

The sooner we get this virus under control, the sooner we can ease these restrictions and get back to doing the things we love.

More than 500,000 tests will be immediately deployed to London boroughs with many more to follow. Community testing initiatives to be rolled out across London include:

- City of London will prioritise key workers within the Square Mile

including social care, children's services, courts, schools, libraries and university staff. In addition to carers, volunteers, and university students

- Tower Hamlets is focusing testing in harder-to-reach community groups including multi-generational households.
- Hillingdon will specifically target higher prevalence locations
- Harrow's plan will include the business community, and general borough-wide testing

Local authorities can request support for this additional testing and support capability for an initial 6-week period, enabling them to create a bespoke testing programme for their community, using a model of local delivery supported by central resource. Proposals will also be carefully assessed at both a local and national level to ensure they are appropriate and safe and learning can be shared across the country.

Read the [updated community testing prospectus](#).

The decision about which Tier 2 local authorities are deemed to be at significant risk will be made as part of the ongoing review of tiers which considers a range of epidemiological data, alongside other information.

A continued assessment is being made on which local authorities will begin community testing, with the criteria being considered detailed in the [Community testing: explainer](#). Local authorities with rising rates and at significant risk of entering Tier 3 are encouraged to work with regional conveners to develop detailed plans for a community testing programme.

Essex burglar has his sentence increased

Press release

Kyah McKenzie has been handed a custodial sentence after the Solicitor General, Rt Hon Michael Ellis QC MP, referred his sentence to the Court of Appeal.



A man who burgled a house while pretending to be a police officer has been handed a custodial sentence after the Solicitor General, Rt Hon Michael Ellis QC MP, intervened and referred his sentence to the Court of Appeal under the Unduly Lenient Sentence (ULS) scheme.

Kyah McKenzie, 19, and three other men entered the home of the victim in the early hours of 31 July 2018, wearing masks and pretending to be police officers. One of the men carried a long barrelled gun over his shoulder.

The victim was assaulted by the men, dragged by her hair and slapped. They also stole her Samsung tablet, cigarettes and £85 in cash.

After the offenders left, the police were called to the scene. DNA analysis of some dried blood matched that of McKenzie and he was subsequently arrested by police.

McKenzie, who was 16 at the time of the burglary, was sentenced to a 2 year community order on 6 October 2020 at Chelmsford Crown Court and was ordered complete 200 hours of unpaid work.

Following a referral to the Court of Appeal by the Solicitor General, on 16 December the sentence was found to be unduly lenient and has been increased to 3 years' and 6 months detention in a Young Offender's Institution.

Speaking after the hearing, the Solicitor General said:

McKenzie caused significant harm to the victim while impersonating a police officer. I welcome the Court of Appeal's decision today and I hope it brings some closure to the victim.

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