

Press release: Waste companies fined for sub-contracting to fly-tippers

Two Essex companies have received fines and charges totalling more than £45,000 after sub-contracting waste clearance work to a rogue carrier who went on to fly-tip the waste in Colchester.

Waste from a Colchester plant nursery was dumped at a nearby farm and an industrial unit in the town, leading to two companies appearing in a court hearing on Thursday 23 May 2019.

The nursery owner had paid waste and demolition company Walsh & Sons Ltd of West Horndon, Brentwood, £25,000 to clear his site but the waste was fly-tipped at Lodge Farm in Great Horkesley and outside a unit in Axial Way, Colchester.

Mrs Sarah Dunne, prosecuting for the Environment Agency, told Chelmsford Magistrates' Court that waste and demolition company Walsh & Sons said they had sub-contracted the job to Calahans Cleaning Services Ltd of Standford Le Hope. There was no written contract and neither company complied with its statutory duty of care.

She told the court that Nick Walsh, director of Walsh & Sons, had acted "with integrity" once he knew of the fly-tipping and had arranged for the waste to be cleared within 9 hours. Both companies had pleaded guilty and had apologised for the errors made.

The court heard that Calahans had employed a skip company to take the waste but had failed in their duty of care to check if the company was registered to carry waste, ask to where the waste would be taken, or completed any transfer of waste papers. The failure to complete and retain Waste Transfer Notes had made it impossible for the fly-tippers to be traced.

Mrs Dunne told the court:

The quantity of fly-tipped material was large and ugly and affected two locations. Both defendants failed to exercise their statutory duty of care and the waste was dumped as a result of these failures.

Ordering Walsh & Sons Ltd to pay a fine of £33,500, costs of £2,924.26 and a victim surcharge of £170, presiding magistrate Simon Phillips said the company had displayed a "high degree of negligence".

Calahans Cleaning Services Ltd were ordered to pay a £6,000 fine together with costs of £2,924.26 and a victim surcharge of £170. The presiding magistrate said that the failure to take reasonable measures meant that "the

opportunity to find the offender was lost”.

After the hearing, Environment Officer Sarah Frost said:

The duty of care cannot simply be delegated to another company. There is a duty to check how the next waste holder in the chain will handle the waste and where the waste’s journey will end.

[News story: Tobii’s purchase of Smartbox raises competition concerns](#)

Tobii and Smartbox design and supply technology – known as augmentative and assistive communication or “AAC” solutions – that enables people with complex speech and language needs to communicate. This could include a computerised device with an additional access method such as a joystick or eye gaze camera.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) launched a [Phase 2](#) inquiry in February after initial competition concerns led to the merger being referred to a Group of independent panel members at the CMA for an in-depth investigation.

In its provisional findings, the Group has found that the merger could lead to a substantial lessening of competition in the supply of certain AAC solutions, where the businesses are the two leading suppliers and compete closely.

Kip Meek, chair of the independent inquiry group carrying out the investigation, said:

This is vital equipment, used by many people who have difficulty communicating because of a disability or illness. It is typically bought on behalf of the those that need it by the NHS, charities and schools, so it’s important to ensure that pricing remains competitive.

We are concerned that the merged company would face little competition, which could lead to higher prices, reductions in the range of products available for users and less product development.

The CMA has set out potential options for addressing its provisional concerns, which include blocking the deal by requiring Tobii to sell the Smartbox business.

Views are invited on the provisional findings by 20 June 2019 and the notice of possible remedies by 13 June 2019. The CMA's final report will be issued by 25 July 2019.

More information can be found on the [Tobii/Smartbox case page](#).

[Press release: Vaccine for older adults gives significant protection against flu](#)

The [annual flu report](#) published by Public Health England reports that Influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 was the main strain circulating this season although Influenza A(H3N2) also circulated later on. Low to moderate levels of flu activity were seen in the community although impact on secondary care in terms of hospitalisations and ICU admissions was high.

The report shows that the flu vaccine offered to those eligible for immunisation this season reduced the likelihood of visiting the GP because of flu by approximately 44%.

Flu is known to particularly affect older people as they tend to have weaker immune systems. The adjuvanted vaccine, which was given to the majority of adults aged 65 and over for the first time this season, was estimated to have provided approximately 60% protection against the flu strains circulating this winter.

More children also took up the offer of the flu vaccine this winter than ever before, with around 3 million being vaccinated. As younger children have poorer hand and respiratory hygiene than adults, they tend to spread flu more easily, so vaccinating children, protects not only them, but also other vulnerable groups around them. Next season, all children up to the age of 10 years will be offered the nasal spray vaccine which means that all children in primary school will be eligible across the whole of the UK.

Dr Richard Pebody, Head of Flu at Public Health England, said:

We're pleased that the adjuvanted vaccine, which was offered to older adults for the first time this year in England provided encouraging protection against the main circulating strains this winter. The flu vaccine programme demonstrates the value of vaccination throughout the life course.

We're pleased that more parents have been taking up the offer of vaccination for their children – and encourage anyone who is

eligible to do so every winter. It's the best defence we have against this unpredictable virus.

Seema Kennedy, Public Health Minister said:

It's great to see that most 65 and overs in this country received the flu jab this year and those who did so were at a reduced risk of getting flu and less likely to have to see their GP as a result.

It's also really promising to see that this year around 3 million children were vaccinated – and we're expanding and improving the vaccine programme so that from next year it will be available to all children in primary school.

This data continues to prove that vaccines work – and I urge everyone to continue to take advantage of the world leading programme of vaccines we have in this country.

This season, people aged 18 to 64 in an at-risk group were offered the 'quadrivalent' vaccine in injected form (protecting against 4 strains of flu). A new 'adjuvanted' vaccine was also available for anyone aged 65 and over.

Data on the effectiveness of this season's vaccines against Influenza B strains are unavailable, as these strains have not circulated widely this season.

Reported end of season flu vaccine effectiveness against all strains was:

- 44.3% (95% CI 26.8, 57.7) across all ages
- 48.6% (95% CI -4.4, 74.7) for 2-17 year olds (LAIV only)
- 44.2% (95% CI 21.3, 60.5) for 18-64 year olds
- 49.9% (95% CI -13.7, 77.9) for those aged 65 and over (all vaccine)
- 62% (95% CI 3.4, 85.0) for those aged 65 and over (aTIV only)

People who are eligible for the flu vaccine this year included:

- adults aged 65 and over
- adults aged 18 to 64, with a long-term health condition
- children aged 2 to 3 via their GP practice
- school children in years reception, 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5
- pregnant women
- health and social care workers
- carers
- morbidly obese people

Adults with chronic conditions need the flu vaccine because people with respiratory diseases like chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), emphysema or asthma are estimated to be 7 times more likely to die if they catch flu, and people with cardiovascular problems like chronic heart disease

or angina, or have had a stroke, are 11 times more likely to die compared to those without underlying health problems. The risk is far worse for those with chronic liver disease, who may be up to 48 times more likely to die if they get flu.

The World Health Organization (WHO) makes recommendations for the composition of the northern hemisphere flu vaccine every February, and this is published 6 months in advance to allow for vaccine production times. The adjuvanted trivalent influenza (aTIV) vaccine which PHE and the NHS recommended this year for people aged 65 and over, was licenced for use in this age group in September 2017. It has previously been used in other countries.

[News story: Revolutionary new tools to tackle streaming of child abuse](#)

The Home Secretary last week (Tuesday 21 May) pledged a further £300,000 towards the development of cutting-edge technology that disrupts the live streaming of child exploitation and abuse.

It came after he attended a roundtable with private technology firms who showcased a series of new technological innovations designed to tackle the growing online problem.

The new innovations were developed as part of a fund set up by the Home Office's Joint Security and Resilience Centre (JSaRC) – a unit that works with industry to respond to emerging security challenges.

Home Secretary Sajid Javid said:

The live streaming of child abuse is vile and sickens me to the core.

It disgusts me that twisted paedophiles lurking on the internet are able order this type of horrific abuse at the click of a button – and cowardly predators are making money from these horrific acts.

I'm doing everything in my power to end all forms of child sexual abuse – but we need action on all fronts. It's encouraging to see private firms developing new technology to disrupt this perverse trade and I will continue to give them my support.

The Home Secretary met representatives from five small and medium sized technology companies who have all developed concepts to stop live streams of child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA). The developments also have the potential to help law enforcement bring perpetrators to justice and identify

the location that people are viewing livestreamed abuse.

Among the concepts presented were a tool to identify and block livestreamed abuse by analysing viewers' comments and the development of a capability that can analyse video streams and automatically link content depicting the same individuals or locations.

The Home Secretary has made it his mission to tackle all forms of CSEA. In a speech last September, he detailed how children were being abused to order online around the world, sometimes for as little as £12. In some cases, perpetrators are even selecting the age, hair colour, gender and clothing of the child they want to see abused over the internet.

These innovations are the latest in a series of measures announced by the Home Office to tackle all forms of CSEA.

Last month the Home Secretary launched the Online Harms White Paper, which sets out ways to keep children safe online, including imposing a statutory duty of care on tech companies, enforced by an independent regulator.

Interim codes of practice being drawn up, which the Home Office will also expect the future regulator to include in its code of practice, are likely to include the reasonable steps companies should take to proactively identify and act upon CSEA activity or content, including within live streams.

Other actions include:

- in November the Home Secretary convened a Hackathon in the US to work with tech firms to develop new tools to tackle online grooming
- last week a Home Office-consortium gave £635,000 to the Marie Collins Foundation to help tackle CSEA at source internationally
- convening advertisers to discuss how advertising is inadvertently funding sites with CSEA content, including live streams

[Speech: Philip Hammond's speech at the Resolution Foundation](#)

Thank you Torsten, it's a great pleasure to be here with you this morning and I welcome your latest report as a valuable contribution to this debate.

Ten years ago, the world was in the throes of the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression.

The banking system was broken.

The economy was in recession.

People were at risk of losing their jobs and their savings.

Thanks to our economic plan, and the hard work of the British people, we have turned a corner in our long recovery from that period.

The economy has grown now for nine straight years.

The deficit last year was just 1.1% of GDP and our national debt is falling sustainably for the first time in a generation...

...meaning that, going forward as a nation, we once again have genuine choices.

And we have, of course, got a remarkable story to tell on jobs – with the employment rate at a record high and unemployment at its lowest point since 1975.

I am proud of that record – but the job is not yet done.

We are still dealing with the deepest scars of the recession – in the form of weakened productivity growth, and, especially, low wage growth, which remains below pre-recession levels, despite recent improvements.

We have, of course, already acted to address the challenge of low wage growth for those on the lowest pay.

The introduction of the National Living Wage in 2016 gave Britain's low paid the biggest pay rise in 20 years.

When we increased the rate again in April, 1.8 million workers were better off.

The pay of a full-timer on national living wage has risen by £2750 a year since 2016

And the percentage of jobs defined as low paid, as today's Resolution Foundation report shows, is at its lowest level since 1980.

But with around 18% of the workforce still working in low paid jobs, there is more to do.

Despite the recent good news on wage growth, a decade of low rates of pay increase has slowed the rate of growth in living standards.

And it has also played into a deeper sense of anxiety about our economic system, about our society and our politics.

[Political content redacted.]

The truth is that we have seen a gap open up – in Britain and in other developed countries – between the theory of how a market economy and free trade creates and distributes wealth, and the reality experienced by many ordinary people.

We ignore that gap at our peril because if we do not address it, it will be

filled with the reckless promises of the populists.

But that doesn't mean we should abandon our economic model.

As so often is the case, the populists do not have the answers, but they are quick to identify the problems.

So for those, like me, who believe passionately that harnessing the power of market economics is the only way to deliver progress...

...it is imperative that we take decisive action to show that the regulated market model can respond to these challenges;

...to deliver higher wages and higher living standards...

...as well as providing solutions to the great societal challenges of our age.

That means building the homes that the next generation needs;

Supporting people of all ages to embrace technology change through retraining and reskilling, so that technology means higher living standards, not higher unemployment;

It means closing the gap between our regions through sustained investment in infrastructure;

And harnessing market-based solutions to show that de-carbonisation and rising living standards can go hand-in-hand.

But above all, it means delivering rising living standards, through sustainable real wage growth, year after year.

Of course, over the medium term, sustainable real wage growth is only possible through productivity growth.

That's why I have redirected government resources to that goal, through record levels of investment in infrastructure, a renewed focus on skills, and a relentless programme of support for innovation in the economy.

But raising Britain's productivity is a medium-term challenge. And there is some evidence to suggest that the continued availability of flexible, low-cost labour, may undermine the incentive for productivity-enhancing investment.

So if we are going to meet our ambition of making the economy work for everyone, one of the best levers we have is to deliver carefully considered increases to the National Living Wage.

In 2016, we set a target for the National Living Wage to reach 60% of median earnings by 2020 – and we will deliver on that, giving a pay rise to millions of workers.

Now we need to decide where to go next.

And as I said in the Spring Statement earlier this year, we want to be ambitious, with the goal of ultimately ending low pay altogether in this country.

But we do not want to be reckless – taking excessive risks with the employment prospects of the lowest paid, or with our future economic growth.

From my initial conversations with trade union and business leaders alike, it is clear that there is a broad support for that ambitious approach...

...and broad support, too, for a careful implementation of it, avoiding unintended consequences.

We are greatly helped of course in this country in navigating the path to a sustainable higher National Living Wage by the existence of the LPC, a highly respected tri-partite body embracing employers, unions and academics, able to act as an independent and impartial advisor on the rate of progress that is sustainable.

So our task is to set the remit within which the LPC will work – and to ensure they have sufficient flexibility to allow them to deliver it sustainably.

To help us identify how to do that, I asked Professor Arin Dube, as a recognised expert on minimum wage policy, to review the evidence, particularly evidence from international comparators. I'm delighted to welcome him to London this week – and I look forward to receiving his report in the autumn. And, indeed, to hearing from him in just a moment.

Let me finish with one final thought.

Whoever the next Prime Minister is, one of his or her central tasks will be to show a new, and sometimes sceptical, generation that a properly regulated market economy remains the most powerful force available to us for unlocking aspiration and raising living standards.

And bold, decisive action on the National Living Wage, sustainably delivered, will be an important demonstration of the power of that argument...

[Political content redacted]

So that we demonstrate, once again, that the well-regulated market delivers for all our people.

Now, I look forward to hearing the thoughts of Professor Dube and others about how we can turn that vision into a sustainable reality.

Thank you.