

# [News story: Civil Procedure Rule Committee: Annual open meeting 10 May 2019](#)

The open meeting of the Civil Procedure Rule Committee will take place on the above date at the Ministry of Justice HQ, 102 Petty France, London, SW1H 9AJ from 10:30am – 3:30pm.

Guests will be observers only and not be able to participate in the Committee's business or contribute to items in the agenda. However, there will be an opportunity at the end of the meeting for guests to ask pre-submitted questions to the Committee.

## **Attendance**

Accommodation is limited, so we are asking potential guests to complete a short [application form](#) (MS Word Document, 19.7KB) and return it by 4pm on Wednesday 24 April 2019 to the secretariat at the following postal or email address:-

Civil Procedure Rule Committee Secretariat  
Post Point 10.18  
Ministry of Justice  
102 Petty France  
London SW1H 9AJ

DX 152380 Westminster 8

Email: [peter.clough@justice.gov.uk](mailto:peter.clough@justice.gov.uk)

Applications to attend close on 24 April 2019 at 4pm.

## **Format of the meeting**

The nature of the Committee's work means that, at the time of this announcement, we cannot confirm the topics that will be under discussion, however, an agenda will be available for the meeting.

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# [News story: Funding awarded to support](#)

# vulnerable EU citizens apply for settled status

Home Secretary Sajid Javid has today (Wednesday 10 April 2019) announced that 57 organisations across the UK will receive funding to provide practical support to vulnerable or at-risk people applying to the EU Settlement Scheme.

The Home Office has made up to £9 million available in funding which will be used to help organisations both inform vulnerable individuals about the need to apply for settled status and support them to complete their applications to protect their status as the UK exits the EU.

The successful organisations, including disability and homeless charities and a wide-range of community organisations will provide support to an estimated 200,000 people, who may be marginalised or in need of extra help.

The funding comes as the Home Office confirmed it had now received more than 400,000 applications to the EU Settlement Scheme.

Home Secretary Sajid Javid said:

EU citizens have contributed so much to this country and we want them all to stay. That's why we have made the EU Settlement Scheme free and simple to use.

It's vital no one is left behind and we support vulnerable people who may have difficulties applying.

This £9million of funding will help do that.

Those who may require additional support include victims of human trafficking or domestic abuse, those with severe mental health conditions, those without a permanent address, and those who are elderly and isolated.

Over the last year, officials have met with experts from more than 200 community groups, voluntary sector bodies and businesses nationwide that have strong local links with vulnerable EU citizens to inform them about the EU Settlement Scheme and to make sure that we reach everyone.

Additional support is also available to those EU citizens in the UK who do not have the appropriate access, skills or confidence to apply. This includes [over 200 assisted digital locations across the UK](#) where applicants can be supported through their application.

The EU Settlement Scheme is designed to make it straightforward for EU citizens and their family members to stay after the UK leaves the EU.

They only need to complete 3 key steps – prove their identity, show that they

live in the UK, and declare any criminal convictions. Deal or no deal, EU citizens will have until at least 31 December 2020 to apply.

Full details of all the organisations receiving funding will be published on GOV.UK in due course.

The Home Office will be publishing a full report on the public beta test phase shortly. Further information will be published in statistical updates and a more detailed quarterly official statistics publication from August 2019.

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## [News story: GAD and ERNIE 5](#)

### **GAD helps ensure Premium Bond draws remain random**

Statistical tests carried out by experts at the Government Actuary's Department (GAD) help ensure Premium Bond winners are chosen fairly!

The power behind the generation of the random numbers in each monthly draw has recently been upgraded to a new version called ERNIE 5 (or Electronic Random Number Indicator Equipment).

So, before the launch GAD carried out independent statistical tests on the ERNIE 5 machines to reassure National Savings and Investments (NS&I) that the draw output appeared random.

### **Cash prizes**

Premium Bonds from NS&I do not pay interest, but investors get the chance to win a range of cash prizes in monthly draws. These include two £1 million prizes distributed every month. These winnings are free of income tax and capital gains tax. People can withdraw their money whenever they like. As NS&I is backed by HM Treasury, all money invested is 100% secure.

### **Lightning speed**

There have been 5 generations of ERNIEs with the first one being invented by a Bletchley Park code breaker in 1956. The new ERNIE 5 is based on quantum technology that uses light photons. This allows the random numbers for a monthly prize draw to be generated far quicker than had previously been possible.

### **Assessing randomness**

Since 1970 the Government Actuary has undertaken independent and robust statistical testing to assess the randomness of each monthly draw. While it's not possible to confirm absolute randomness, the Government Actuary provides

a monthly certificate to NS&I stating there is no reason to believe the output from ERNIE is not random. Monthly draw prizes cannot be paid until this certificate is issued.

## **Testing ERNIE 5**

GAD assessed a large number of sample draws produced by ERNIE 5. It was vital to confirm these sample draws would pass the standard monthly randomness tests required to issue the draw certificates. A wider range of checks was undertaken to provide additional reassurance for each aspect of the output and these were all completed successfully.

## **Strength to strength**

The first monthly Premium Bond draw using ERNIE 5 was in March 2019. GAD will continue to independently test the monthly draw output, issuing confirmation certificates as appropriate, after which prizes can be paid to the winners.

Further details on [Premium Bonds and ERNIE 5](#) are available at NS&I's website.

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# **[Press release: Government pledges to improve the way Council Tax debt is recovered](#)**

- Minister commits to making the Council Tax collection system fairer and more efficient
- New guidance coming to improve how councils recover unpaid Council Tax and end aggressive enforcement tactics
- Government to work with charities, debt advice organisations and councils on new guidance

Following concerns from charities, debt advice bodies and local councils, ministers are moving forward with work to create a fairer, more efficient and compassionate debt recovery system.

Local Government Minister Rishi Sunak MP said:

Council Tax collection is essential to running public services, like caring for those most at risk, collecting bins and keeping our transport networks running.

The experiences of some innovative councils show that Council Tax collection rates can be improved without resorting to the unfair treatment of vulnerable people.

That's why I'm pushing forward work to make the Council Tax collection system fairer and more efficient – so people are treated with compassion while services get the funds they need.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) will engage with charities, debt advice organisations and local authorities on changes to improve the current Council Tax collection system before considering further reforms later this year.

Reforms to the system could include:

- ensuring affordability assessments are central to Council Tax collection processes so individual circumstances are taken into account and people are given appropriate time to pay off arrears
- improving the links between councils and the debt advice sector
- developing and supporting fairer debt intervention methods

Every year, councils issue nearly 24 million Council Tax bills to help fund key local services, from adult social care and children's services, to refuse collections and leisure facilities. Uncollected tax means less money for services and higher bills for residents who do pay on time.

The government wants to bring in a more effective Council Tax collection system which treats people more fairly, while ensuring the money required to fund public services is collected. It recognises consideration of personal circumstances can help a person's financial recovery.

MHCLG action forms part of cross-government efforts to improve the treatment of vulnerable debtors. This includes plans for HM Treasury to implement a 'breathing space' and statutory payment plan for people in debt and a Ministry of Justice review of bailiff regulations.

Caroline Siarkiewicz, director and debt advice expert at the Money and Pensions Service, said:

One third of people seeking debt advice have Council Tax arrears, so it's really important that people receive the right guidance and support to manage their finances.

We are delighted that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has committed to reviewing how local authorities recover unpaid Council Tax.

Through the development of our Supportive Council Tax Recovery resource, we know that councils that take a progressive approach to debt recovery can relieve stress and anxiety for residents, as well as have a beneficial impact on their collections rates.

We look forward to working with the department to help them create a more progressive and efficient Council Tax debt collection system.

St Albans district council is forging stronger connections with the debt advice sector to create a more consistent approach to determining residents' ability to pay.

Staff proactively refer vulnerable residents to debt advice services. They hold off from applying to the courts for Liability Orders – which give councils powers to collect debt – unless payments run beyond 12 months or multiple payment arrangements are broken. The council also requires enforcement agents who collect debts to sign up to the council's new affordability approach.

The council has been able to maintain high collection rates (98.9% in 2017 to 2018, compared to a 97.1% average across England) while treating residents fairly, proportionately and consistently.

North Warwickshire borough council is adopting a holistic approach to supporting vulnerable households. It does this through its Financial Inclusion Partnership, which is committed to helping residents access the right information and services according to their needs.

By putting assessments of what people in financial difficulty can afford at the heart of their processes, they have been able to better support residents in debt towards financial recovery while continuing to reduce historic arrears.

They are also building innovative partnerships with advice agencies and charities to engage hard-to-reach people, for example by providing debt advice through a food parcel scheme.

Their new approach contributes to their 98.6% collection rate in 2017 to 2018 and has also led to less reliance on enforcement agents, with 60% fewer cases referred to bailiffs in 2017 to 2018 compared to the same period in the previous year.

In 2013, the department issued [guidance to councils recommending good enforcement practices](#). It said councils should be willing to negotiate payments at any point in the enforcement process, take account of individuals' circumstances, and agree affordable and sustainable payment plans to ensure debts are paid off in a reasonable time.

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## **[News story: Pubs Code Adjudicator \(PCA\) Bulletin April 2019](#)**

The [Pubs Code Adjudicator \(PCA\) Bulletin April 2019](#) (PDF, 171KB, 2 pages) provides information relating to:

- Beer waste and duty guidance
- Publication of PCA/ DPCA arbitration awards
- Arbitration update: initial stay process
- MRO Questionnaire

The beer waste and duty guidance was the subject of a statutory public consultation, which can be found [here](#).