

SIA and HMRC operation to check on illegal working practices in the security industry

Press release

The Security Industry Authority (SIA) and HMRC carried out joint operations in London, Bradford and Glasgow last week to ensure that security staff were employed legitimately and treated fairly.



Security Industry Authority

Teams attended a number of venues and spoke to security operatives to check the correct taxes were being paid and to ensure they were not victims of any labour abuse.

During the course of the targeted operation 29 venues were visited and 55 checks on operatives were carried out across the three cities. Further enquiries will be made to check on payments made in cash and any further taxes due.

Paul Fullwood, Director of Inspections and Enforcement, SIA said:

By working together our two organisations will educate businesses and through concerted action we will focus on those who fail to comply or manipulate the law. We want a level playing field for those legitimate businesses who play by the rules.

The SIA has been working with HMRC to educate security companies about which security staff they need to operate PAYE for. 2,500 more operatives are now correctly being paid through PAYE who were previously self-employed, protecting their rights and benefits.

Further information:

- The Security Industry Authority is the organisation responsible for regulating the private security industry in the United Kingdom,

reporting to the Home Secretary under the terms of the Private Security Industry Act 2001. The SIA's main duties are the compulsory licensing of individuals undertaking designated activities, and managing the voluntary Approved Contractor Scheme.

- In 2018 the SIA and HMRC signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) and agreed to share information about businesses and individuals working within the security sector in order to clamp down on those taking part in illegal working practices and tax fraud.
- For further information about the Security Industry Authority visit www.gov.uk/sia. The SIA is also on [Facebook](#) (Security Industry Authority), [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#) (SIAuk).

Published 26 November 2021

[New guidance for AOs on prevention of malpractice](#)

News story

Updated Ofqual guidance outlines how awarding organisations should address malpractice and maladministration.



Ofqual has published new guidance about malpractice and maladministration for awarding organisations (AOs). This follows a [consultation](#).

Ofqual, as the exams regulator, already sets robust rules for awarding organisations which require them to prevent and deal with malpractice and maladministration. This new expanded and updated guidance further strengthens the regulatory framework, drawing on what we have learned in practice. The guidance will help awarding organisations to comply with our rules. Committing malpractice or maladministration is simply not acceptable. This guidance helps to make sure that awarding organisations do all they can to prevent it, anyone engaging in it is investigated with the necessary rigour

and, where appropriate, action is taken against those who are responsible.

Considering the number of qualifications that are awarded each year, cases of malpractice and maladministration are rare. Nevertheless, this guidance will help to make sure that regulated qualifications continue to be valued and trusted: for students and apprentices, who need them to progress to the next step in their lives, and for employers and educators, who need to be confident that they are an accurate reflection of what a student knows, understands and can do.

The guidance is largely as set out in the consultation. Some drafting has been refined for clarity.

The guidance will become part of [Ofqual's handbook for awarding organisations](#). Decisions, outcomes and an analysis of responses are available on the [consultation on Guidance on malpractice and maladministration](#).

The guidance takes effect from today.

Published 26 November 2021

[HMRC urges shoppers to be aware of post-Brexit changes before key Christmas shopping dates](#)

On Black Friday (26 November 2021) – and with Cyber Monday a few days away – HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) is urging shoppers to consider some top tips before they start browsing online to ensure they're not hit with unexpected customs charges and end up over budget this holiday season.

Changes introduced on 1 January 2021 mean that in the same way that consumers have previously had to pay charges when buying certain items from non-EU sellers, they may now also need to do so when buying goods from the EU.

Katherine Green and Sophie Dean, Directors General, Borders and Trade, HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) said:

With Christmas rapidly approaching, we don't want shoppers to be caught out by unexpected charges which will take the fun out of their Christmas shopping experience.

There are now a number of factors that people will need to consider when purchasing goods from the EU, so shoppers are being advised to check guidance to ensure they know what they will owe.

HMRC recommends people look at 7 key areas to determine whether there will be charges on their goods. If there are charges to pay, shoppers are being warned that they may also need to pay a 'handling fee' to the courier company before their goods are released.

Top Tip 1: Be aware of where you, the recipient, are based

Shoppers based in Northern Ireland won't be affected by these changes due to the Northern Ireland Protocol, however those in Great Britain should be prepared for potential changes.

Top Tip 2: Check if your order contains goods subject to excise duties, such as tobacco, alcohol or perfume

Unlike other items, there is no lower threshold for customs charges when it comes to excise goods, so there will be charges due no matter the value or origin of your goods.

Shoppers buying excise goods will need to pay import VAT and excise duty and may also need to pay customs duty (be mindful of our Bonus Tip below!).

Top Tip 3: Check if your order is worth more than £135, before extra costs, such as shipping and insurance are applied

Shoppers buying stocking fillers or small value items, not including excise goods, don't need to worry as goods sent in consignments worth less than £135 should not attract additional charges, as UK VAT is collected by the seller on behalf of HMRC at the point of sale. This will also apply to goods being purchased from non-EU countries.

Anyone buying a more expensive product from abroad – over £135 – will now need to pay import VAT and may need to pay customs duty. The amount due will depend on a range of factors, including shipping and insurance costs so, to avoid surprises, consumers should consult their seller.

Shoppers who already know they will need to pay import VAT should make sure their seller does not charge them VAT, otherwise they may be charged twice. See Top Tip 5.

Top Tip 4: Remember there are new charges if you're sending presents overseas – or if someone abroad sends gifts to you

If you're lucky enough to [receive a gift from someone based in the EU](#) and it is valued at less than £39 and it does not contain excise goods, it will be exempt from import VAT and customs duty. Above the £39 threshold, import VAT will be due and once the value of the gift reaches £135, customs duty will also be payable. You could also get charged a "handling fee" – see Top Tip 5

If you are planning on sending a gift to someone based overseas, you should check guidance published by the relevant customs authority to check their specific rules and charges.

Top Tip 5: Be aware of how and when you could be notified of charges

Anyone needing to pay customs charges will be contacted by the courier company and asked to pay the charges before they can receive their goods. Alternatively, the seller may arrange to pay any charges upfront on your behalf, but you should check with the seller to avoid any unwelcome surprises.

Top Tip 6: Check the guidance available to you

To help shoppers navigate these changes, HMRC has produced diagrams outlining 3 fictional scenarios about buying goods from the EU and has published a [simple guide on GOV.UK](#), which also contains essential information on how to dispute a charge, return unwanted goods and to get a refund on the charges paid.

Bonus Tip: Check with the seller whether the goods originated in the EU and whether they qualify for a zero tariff

Customs duty won't be due on goods if they meet criteria set out in the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement and a zero tariff can be correctly applied.

The [Rules of Origin](#) requirements mean that even if your parcel is valued above £135, if the goods you are buying originate in – or have been sufficiently worked or processed within – the EU, the seller confirms this and the zero tariff is claimed on the customs declaration, you will not need to pay any customs duties although import VAT will still be due.

If customs duty is due, the rate – or the tariff – for each item can be found within the [trade tariff tool](#) but it's recommended you check with your seller to find out exactly what you will owe.

[Improving for customers and enabling opportunity](#)

[Michelle Donelan's, Minister of State for Higher and Further Education, speech to Times Higher Education Conference](#) this week, provides a timely reminder of the critical role higher and further education has to play in the post-Covid economic recovery.

This week we published the annual [Student Support for Higher Education 2021 Statistical Release for England, Wales and Northern Ireland](#). The publication sets out the amount of funding awarded and paid to students and higher education providers in the last academic year and shows the scale of SLC's

role in enabling the opportunity that further and higher education can provide. In England, the total amount paid out in student support across full-time, part-time and postgraduate students reached £19.6 billion in academic year 2020/21. This is up 6.7% from 2019/20 which saw the amount paid at £18.4 billion. The number of students paid increased by 7.1% from 1.4 million students in academic year 2019/20 to 1.5 million in 2020/21 – a notably higher increase than in the previous academic year when levels increased by just 1.5%. And this academic year, we again have already processed and paid applications to an increased number of students.

However, delivering student support on this scale is not always plain sailing, especially when absorbing the impact of the pandemic. We haven't always got things right and unfortunately, at peak times, too many customers had to wait too long to speak to us. I am sorry that some of our customers were inconvenienced. To help customers during these busy periods we made significantly more student finance information available online and we expanded our support and service through social media channels.

But we are making more fundamental improvements to the customer experience.

We are currently trialling a new customer management system that for the first time gives us a 360 degree view of our customer. That in turn means that next year, all our customers who are studying for an undergraduate degree will receive automatic notifications about their application status, telling them whether they need to contact us to provide additional information to support their application and when we expect they will receive their funding. In addition to being able to self-serve in this way, they will be able to live chat and, if a query is more complex, send us a message or speak to an advisor. And that ability to see all customers' interactions with us will further allow us to provide better support to customers with more complex funding situations. Starting on this journey is our priority focus now.

I am delighted that our [Student Finance Customer Panel](#) and Disabled Students' Customer Panel, formed this year, have played a key role in some of the recent steps we have taken to improve the customer experience for some of our most vulnerable customers. We have started to make small, practical improvements to our application process, for example, reducing the burden of evidence where the regulations let us and expanding our information and guidance for students who are estranged from their families, listening to our stakeholders, making it clearer how these students go about getting their funding.

Elsewhere we have listened to Martin Lewis, who asked that we made it clearer what students are entitled to in their maintenance loan. So through online and social media, we have made the difference between an individual's maintenance loan and the maximum possible award clearer, providing information on what this might mean for a student's finances.

Moving forward, we will deliver further improvements to the information we provide to all our customers. By doing so, we hope to make student loans easier to understand and simpler to manage.

We don't always get it right and we have much more to do, but I am confident that by continuing to listen and engage with customers, stakeholders, our shareholders in Government, and by maintaining our focus on delivering improvements, we will provide the intuitive, supportive and trusted service that we aspire to deliver to our customers.

[New flood scheme to protect homes next to the River Teme in Worcester](#)

- New flood risk management scheme for Lower Wick area of Worcester
- The new scheme will reduce the risk of flooding to 26 properties
- The design is due to be completed by the end of the year with construction beginning in the spring

The Environment Agency is leading on the project with Worcestershire County Council assisting on the plans for the scheme for Toronto Close in the Lower Wick area of the city.

Toronto Close is situated close to the River Teme and Laugherne Brook and has a history of flooding, most recently in February 2020 when 16 houses were flooded.

The new scheme will reduce the risk of flooding to 26 properties and consists of an embankment and a new wall along the Laugherne Brook together with strengthening an existing wall around Powick Mills. The scheme will also include two new flood gates and the strengthening of the Old Road wall.

The design is due to be completed by the end of the year with construction beginning in the spring and is due to be completed by the end of the next year.

Environment Agency Manager for Worcester, David Throup said:

The work will provide improved flood resilience for Toronto Close and we are working closely with Worcestershire County Council to ensure the delivery of this scheme. Flooding has a devastating impact which is why protecting people and communities is our top priority.

We can already see the impacts of climate change in the UK and around the world. With this scheme we will be upgrading and improving the existing defences to better protect communities from the future flood risk climate change will bring, greatly reducing the risk of flooding to properties most vulnerable when the local rivers rise.

Councillor Alan Amos, Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways and Transport added:

This scheme is one of a number of flood risk management projects which Worcestershire County Council is investing in, to reduce the risk of flooding on local communities. We are supportive of this scheme and the benefits it will bring and are pleased to see the progress towards delivery. We will be working closely with the Environment Agency to ensure their successful delivery of the project.

The Environment Agency provides a Flood Warning Service for Lower Wick. Please contact the 24-hour Floodline service on 0345 988 1188 for any ongoing flood related queries or advice. Sign up for Flood Warnings at <https://www.gov.uk/sign-up-for-flood-warnings> .

The best way to protect yourself from flooding is to know what to do in advance – download and save a simple [Prepare, Act, Survive plan](#) so you'll know what to do when there's a flood warning in your area.

Across the country, the Environment Agency has led projects to deliver flood schemes that see 314,000 homes are now better protected since 2015. Yet the Environment Agency is delivering more: earlier this year the Government announced a record £5.2 billion investment in flood and coastal defences to build around 2,000 new flood and coastal defences and better protect 336,000 properties by 2027.

Notes to editors

Make sure you're prepared for flooding this year by following these top tips:

- Prepare a bag that includes medical and insurance documents
- Check the latest flood situation online <https://check-for-flooding.service.gov.uk/>
- Know how to turn off your gas, electricity and water
- Check your insurance to make sure you are covered for flood damage. If you rent your home, it is your responsibility to have insurance for your belongings.
- If you are flooded, call 999 if in immediate danger and follow advice from emergency services.