

# Jobcentre guidance on new national COVID restrictions



This means from 5 January 2021 until further notice, the following updated jobcentre guidance will apply to customers in England, and will ensure essential support is provided whilst keeping colleagues and customers safe.

- Jobcentres will remain open, as they have throughout this pandemic, to provide essential services and support to those who we cannot help in any other way.
- Jobcentres will be open from 10am to 2pm to help keep our colleagues and customers as safe as possible in the latest phase of this pandemic. Members of the public entering a jobcentre, unless [exempt](#), will be required to wear a face covering.
- We will ensure that this support continues to be delivered in line with the latest government and PHE guidance – such as maintaining social distancing and rigorous cleaning regimes – keeping our colleagues and customers safe.
- Work Coaches will be empowered to support customers through the best and most appropriate channels – whether online, by phone, or in person – with jobcentres remaining open to help those who need extra support and are unable to interact with us on the phone or digitally.
- Our Work Coaches will continue to deliver employment support programmes such as the Job Entry Targeted Support (JETs) scheme, by phone or through online channels.
- Face-to-face assessments for disability benefits remain suspended.
- If you think you might be entitled to a health and disability benefit,

you should contact us as soon as possible to make a claim in the usual way.

- For existing customers, payments will continue as normal. Anyone who has a change in their needs should contact us immediately so we can ensure they are receiving the correct level of support.

On 3 November 2020, we also confirmed that the suspension of the Minimum Income Floor for self-employed customers claiming Universal Credit in England, Scotland, and Wales has been extended to the end of April 2021. This means that self-employed customers on Universal Credit will receive a payment that reflects their earnings at this difficult time.

### **For Scotland:**

On 4 January 2021, the Scottish Government announced they are moving to level five – the highest of their COVID tiered system. The jobcentre guidance in place for England above will therefore also apply to jobcentres and customers in Scotland.

### **For Wales:**

On 28 December 2020, Wales moved into alert level four – the highest of their COVID tiered system. The jobcentre guidance in place for England above will therefore also apply to jobcentres and customers in Wales.

### **For Northern Ireland:**

Please contact the Department for Communities for more information on measures introduced in Northern Ireland – 028 9082 9000.

Media enquiries for this press release – 020 3267 5144

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#### 1. 15 January 2021

Jobcentres will be open from 10am to 2pm to help keep our colleagues and customers as safe as possible in the latest phase of this pandemic. Members of the public entering a jobcentre, unless exempt, will be required to wear a face covering.

#### 2. 6 January 2021

First published.

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## Unregulated immigration advice earns Directors £17,000 fine

Directors from two law firms which generated £2.5 million in fees by providing unregulated immigration advice have been fined nearly £17,000 and ordered to pay over £28,000 in compensation.

Dan Romulus Dandes and Babbar Ali Jamil (Directors at DDR Legal Services LLP) and Ms Zia Bi (Director of Burlow & Spencer Ltd) were sentenced yesterday, (Tuesday 5 January 2021) at the Old Bailey where they were given the following sentences:

- Mr Dandes received a £20,000 compensation order and fined £750.
- Mr Jamil, who is currently believed to be out of the country was fined £10,000 in his absence.
- Ms Bi was given a fine of £6,000 and an £8,745 compensation order.

The trio were originally found guilty of providing unqualified immigration advice and/or services at the Old Bailey in April 2020 following a two-year investigation by the OISC which revealed fees in excess of £2.5m was generated.

Sentencing, Judge Munro said:

“The consequential loss and the impact on the complainants is far-reaching and in some cases devastating.”

Referring to the defendants the Judge stated:

“All of the defendants were of previous good character. The mitigation in all cases is a genuine lack of knowledge that the criminal behaviour was in fact criminal. Both Ms Bi and Mr Dandes now accept that they were negligent and innocent people suffered as a result.”

Among the complainants there were a number of consequences. One had to leave the UK permanently; another paid £7000 in expenses to contest a failed application; others had to travel to Shanghai or Bangkok to submit applications which were bound to be rejected; and a couple who travelled for work were unable to leave the UK for two years while their documentation was sorted out.

John Tuckett, Immigration Services Commissioner remarked:

“We are pleased with the Judge’s decision today to impose these fines on these individuals, who acted outside the law by providing immigration advice illegally and putting the lives of many vulnerable people at risk. As the Judge stated, these financial penalties will not be able to fully or properly

compensate victims for the 'severe consequences' of the defendants' actions, but we hope it will emphasise the importance of using a regulated immigration advisers".

Mr Dandes began the supervision scheme for DDR Legal Services LLP, (a UK registered company) claiming qualification as an EU registered lawyer.

This meant law firms could circumvent regulation by the OISC or any other appropriate regulatory body as they were under Mr Dandes' supervision.

However, Mr Dandes did not have the necessary UK qualifications to act in a supervisory role, so he was unqualified to supervise, and any advice given by an individual or firm under this scheme was unregulated and illegal.

Burrow and Spencer Ltd, one of the law firms he allegedly supervised, were investigated after an unprecedented 95 complaints were received about the quality of its immigration advice.

Burrow and Spencer Ltd subsequently ceased trading in 2019.

Notes to the Editor

1. The OISC is an independent public body, established under the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, to regulate the provision of immigration advice and services in the UK.
2. The legislation regarding qualification and supervision is provided by section 84 Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
3. For media enquiries, please contact Cornelius Alexander, Corporate Communications Business Partner at the OISC on 0207 211 1617 or [communications@oisc.gov.uk](mailto:communications@oisc.gov.uk).

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## **Window cleaning boss banned after failing to account for £1.7m**

Nicola Bentley (39), from Oxted, Surrey, was the sole director of Stephenson's (National Window Cleaning) Ltd and has now been disqualified from being a company director for 7 years. Her ban is effective from 31 December 2020.

The company was incorporated in January 2017 and provided window cleaning services, predominantly for bookmakers.

The window cleaners traded for 2 years but in January 2019 entered into creditors voluntary liquidation and Nicola Bentley's conduct was referred to the Insolvency Service for further investigations.

The Insolvency Service found that from February 2018 until the company went

into liquidation, Nicola Bentley's company had spent almost £1.7 million.

Nicola Bentley, however, failed to preserve accounting records and investigators could not determine if the amount was for legitimate business expenditure.

The investigation discovered that almost £640,000 had been transferred out of the company bank account to three unknown bank accounts. Nicola Bentley had also failed to keep any records that could identify the source of almost £1.7 million paid into the company bank account and whether it was legitimate business income.

From June 2017 to January 2019, the window cleaning company failed to pay all its tax obligations, with more than £405,000 being owed. Despite more than £2.1 million being paid out of the company bank account, only £1,000 was paid to the tax authorities in relation to its increasing VAT debt.

On 10 December the Secretary of State accepted an undertaking from Nicola Bentley after she did not dispute that she failed to keep sufficient accounting records and did not settle the company's tax liabilities.

Nicola Bentley is now banned from being a director of a company or, whether directly or indirectly, be concerned or take part in the promotion, formation or management of a company unless she has leave of the court

Lawrence Zussman, Deputy Head of Insolvent Investigations, said:

Maintaining company records is a statutory requirement for every business but despite millions passing through Nicola Bentley's company bank account, she failed to provide information about her income and expenditure. The company owed a significant amount of tax yet paid only a minimal amount towards its tax obligations.

Nicola Bentley totally disregarded her responsibilities as a director of Stephenson's and has now been banned from the business environment for seven years.

Nicola Bentley's date of birth is November 1981.

Stephenson's (National Window Cleaning) Ltd (Company Reg no. 10553769).

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](#).

[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:

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## [A message from Simon Lebus, Chief Regulator, on exams in 2021](#)

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## [Over £200 million boost to upgrade UK labs to help scientists tackle COVID-19 and cut emissions](#)

- UK science facilities to be upgraded with £213 million government investment enabling researchers to respond to global challenges such as COVID-19 and climate change
- new world class equipment includes supercomputers in Cardiff to track infectious diseases, airborne sensors in London to monitor greenhouse gas emissions and a unique floating offshore wind testing lab at the University of Plymouth
- part of government's flagship Research and Development (R&D) Roadmap which committed to making the UK the best place in the world for scientists and researchers to live and work

Super computers to track infectious diseases and a first-of-its kind floating offshore wind testing lab are among the world class facilities that UK researchers will gain access to, thanks to a major £213 million government investment to upgrade the UK's scientific infrastructure.

Announced today (Wednesday 6 January) by Science Minister Amanda Solloway, the investment will equip the UK's leading scientists, universities and research institutes with new state-of-the-art equipment to drive forward exceptional research that will help the UK respond to major challenges,

including the COVID-19 pandemic and achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

The £213 million pot includes £27 million for researchers at 43 of the UK's Medical Research Institutes across all corners of the UK providing them with access and upgrades to cutting edge equipment including ultra-high performing computers and microscopes. This will enable researchers to detect and model disease in more detail than ever before, helping the UK respond to COVID-19 and boosting resilience for future pandemics, as well as other diseases such as cancer and dementia.

The multi-million-pound investment will also provide researchers across the country with facilities to test innovative technologies to cut carbon emissions, such as a floating offshore wind turbine testing facility at the University of Plymouth, autonomous marine robotics trialled in Southampton to monitor the health of the southern oceans, as well as airborne sensors in London to monitor greenhouse gas emissions.

Other facilities to receive financial backing includes a unique 'blast diagnostics' laboratory at the University of Sheffield, which will test the UK's ability to respond to the use of explosives in terrorist attacks.

The investment will ensure the UK is the best place in the world for scientists, researchers and entrepreneurs to live and work, while continuing to attract scientific talent from across the globe.

Science Minister Amanda Solloway said:

The response from UK scientists and researchers to coronavirus has been nothing short of phenomenal. We need to match this excellence by ensuring scientific facilities are truly world class, so scientists can continue carrying out life-changing research for years to come as we build back better from the pandemic.

From the world's most detailed telescopes tracking disease to airborne drones monitoring greenhouse gas emissions, our investment will enhance the tools available to our most ambitious innovators across the country. By doing so, scientists and researchers will be able to drive forward extraordinary research that will enable the UK to respond to global challenges such as achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

The £213 million investment, delivered through the government's World Class Labs funding scheme and made through 7 of UK Research and Innovation's (UKRI) research councils, covers investments in all disciplines from physical sciences to arts and humanities.

Facilities to benefit from the investment include:

- **£29 million to upgrade and replace UK scientific equipment:** upgrading and purchasing core equipment for the use of researchers across the UK.

This will equip medical researchers at 43 of the UK's Medical Research Institutes, such as in Birmingham, Glasgow and Cardiff with state-of-the-art research equipment, including new high-performance computers and telescopes to study disease. It will also replace equipment that has been donated to COVID-19 research

- **£25 million to support the installation of highly sophisticated testing facilities at leading UK universities:** This includes a first of a kind offshore floating wind turbine testing facility at the University of Plymouth, and a 'blast diagnostics' laboratory at the University of Sheffield, which will test the UK's ability to respond to the use of explosives in terrorist attacks. Funding will also support new equipment at a multi-disciplinary X-ray facility at the University of Liverpool, helping scientists to understand how carbon dioxide interacts with sandstone rocks, in order to develop improved ways of undertaking carbon capture and storage to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions
- **£34 million for data and digital research infrastructure:** Upgrading the UK's digital research capabilities will enable some of the country's brightest minds to conduct pioneering analytical research that will help inform long term policy decisions. For example, urban data centres in Glasgow, Liverpool and Oxford will receive new hardware to pursue research that will show how COVID-19 has affected social and economic activity in different parts of the UK. Meanwhile, the University of Essex will be backed to conduct a large-scale household survey to understand how the pandemic has affected issues such as home schooling and family relationships
- **£33.5 million to upgrade facilities of UK scientific councils:** This will include a £20 million investment for the Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC) to upgrade laboratory infrastructure at its sites in Oxford, Cheshire, Cleveland and Edinburgh. This will enable the Council to continue developing flagship projects covering a range of topics, from pre-launch satellite testing to the search for dark matter
- **£15 million for the Capability for Collections Fund (CapCo):** investment will renew and upgrade the most vulnerable research facilities across the UK within galleries, libraries, archives and museums. It will focus on conservation and heritage, modernising these spaces which will help serve local communities for generations

The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury, Kemi Badenoch, said:

This investment in state of the art science and research facilities will help the UK's world-leading scientists deliver life-changing research, from tackling infectious diseases and COVID-19, to delivering Net Zero.

It's vital we continue to innovate to drive our economic recovery and level up the country.

Professor Ottoline Leyser, Chief Executive of UKRI said:



Research and innovation infrastructure is key to delivering the government's R&D Roadmap, with some of the most innovative ideas with transformative R&D potential requiring access to leading-edge infrastructures, including national research facilities, equipment and instrumentation, networks of technologies and digital infrastructures, and knowledge-based resources such as collections and museums.

Outstanding infrastructure helps to convene talent from the public and private sectors and across disciplines to tackle society's most complex challenges. It acts as a magnet for researchers and innovators internationally, contributes to local and national economies, and generates knowledge and capability critical to UK policy, security and wellbeing.

The funding forms part of a £300 million commitment to upgrade scientific infrastructure across the UK, made by Business Secretary Alok Sharma, as part of the government's ambitious [R&D Roadmap](#) published in July 2020.

See the [full list of investments](#).