

Investment vehicle wound-up after stripping companies of assets

Charles James Associates Group Ltd was wound up in the public interest on 4 May 2020 in the High Court before Judge Burton of the Insolvency and Companies Court. The Official Receiver has been appointed as liquidator.

In considering the petition, the court heard that Charles James Associates Group purchased companies that were sustainable and solvent, targeting small family operated businesses spread across the UK. Targets tended to be manufacturing companies or those that provided specialist services, including window manufacturing and sales, commercial vehicle repairs and book publishers.

Charles James Associates Group, however, didn't use any of its own funds or invest capital to acquire those businesses but used associated parties to arrange purchase agreements with the companies they intended to buy.

The associated parties would then negotiate it so that companies being bought would use their own money to complete the sale with the associated parties, as well as agreeing that any remaining balances would be paid on a deferred payment basis.

Charles James Associates Group would then purchase those businesses for a nominal sum from the associated parties before stripping the companies of their assets.

This would include diverting funds, using the purchased companies' funds to acquire assets for Charles James Associates Group, making payments to Charles James Associates Group directly and trading the companies to the detriment of their creditors and employees.

Additionally, Charles James Associates Group caused the companies they bought to not pay both their trade and Crown liabilities and in one case secured pension contributions from employees but failed to pay the money collected into the pension fund, which remains unaccounted for.

As a result of these activities, the acquired companies' finances deteriorated and they were placed into insolvency. The asset-stripping conducted by Charles James Associates Group also resulted in serious losses for creditors and employees lost their jobs.

Investigators from the Insolvency Service uncovered the misconduct through confidential enquiries and also found that Charles James Associates Group never had any formal presence at their registered address between September 2017 and April 2019, using the address without the permission of the property's occupants.

The company also traded using the website of the similarly-named connected predecessor company, Charles James Associates PLC, and used the same contact

details on the website. However, Charles James Associates PLC's activities were put to a stop after it was wound-up following its compulsory liquidation in January 2018.

Irshard Mohammed, Senior Investigator at the Insolvency Service, said

Charles James Associates Group cynically purchased companies through deception before stripping them of their assets. Not only did this force previously viable companies to go into insolvency but it also meant employees lost jobs and creditors were out of pocket.

The courts thankfully recognised the severity of Charles James Associates Group's misconduct and removed the company from the corporate arena.

All enquiries concerning the affairs of the company should be made to:

- The Official Receiver, Public Interest Unit, 16th Floor, 1 Westfield Avenue, Stratford, London, E20 1HZ
- Telephone: 020 7637 1110
- Email: piu.or@insolvency.gov.uk

Charles James Associates Group Ltd (Company number: 10719407) was incorporated on 10 April 2017. The current registered office is located at Kemp House, 152 – 160 City Road, London, EC1V 2NX.

The current appointed director of the company is Mr David Roy Howick. However, conflicting information has been filed at Companies House. The authorised share capital of the Company is shown as 1 ordinary shares of £1, with that share being allocated to Myles Bunyard, thus giving him 100% control. However, although Mr Bunyard is recorded as the Person with Significant Control, his share ownership is shown on that filing as "more than 25% but not more than 50%". Mr Bunyard, under his full name of Myles Charles Bunyard, is currently subject to a disqualification undertaking, for a 12-year period to 24 June 2021."

The Petition was presented by The Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy ("BEIS") on 19 November 2019 in the High Court of Justice, Business and Property Courts in England and Wales (CR-2019-007770), under the provisions of section 124A of the Insolvency Act 1986 following confidential enquiries by Company Investigations under section 447 of the Companies Act 1985, as amended.

Company Investigations, part of the Insolvency Service, uses powers under the Companies Act 1985 to conduct confidential fact-finding investigations into the activities of live limited companies in the UK on behalf of the Secretary of State for BEIS. [Further information about live company investigations is available here.](#)

Further information about the work of the Insolvency Service, and how to

complain about financial misconduct, [is available here](#).

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on:

[New guidance published to ensure transport network is safe for those who need to use it](#)

- new guidance published on how to make journeys safely
- public urged to continue to work from home if they can and avoid public transport where possible to reduce pressure on the network
- those who have to travel for work should consider changing their travel habits – including cycling, walking or driving, and avoiding rush hour – to help people socially distance from others and reduce pressure on public transport

New guidance published today (12 May 2020) provides advice on how passengers should make journeys safely, following the publication of the government's [roadmap and strategy for the next phase of the pandemic](#). It urges people to consider cycling, walking or driving to help ensure there is enough capacity for those who need to travel on public transport to do so safely.

As the [Transport Secretary stated on Saturday \(9 May 2020\)](#), even as public transport begins to revert to a full service, the 2-metre social distancing rule would only leave effective capacity for one in ten passengers on many parts of the network.

The advice sets out that if people who cannot work from home and have to travel for work, they should first consider alternatives to public transport. Those driving their own cars have been asked to avoid busy areas.

For those who have to use public transport, the [guidance for passengers on how to travel safely](#) recommends:

- keeping 2 metres apart from others wherever possible
- wearing a face covering if you can
- using contactless payment where possible
- avoiding rush hour travel where feasible
- washing or sanitising your hands as soon as possible before and after travel
- following advice from staff and being considerate to others

All transport operators have been issued guidance on ensuring stations and services are regularly cleaned, making clear to passengers how to stay 2 metres apart where possible in stations, airports and ports, and to ensure

routes for passengers are clearly communicated to avoid crowding. The government's guidance also sets out steps operators should take to provide safe workplaces and services for their staff and passengers across all modes of private and public transport.

To help reduce pressure on the transport network so there is space for social distancing where possible, the Transport Secretary has spoken to train and bus operators and local authorities to ensure they increase the number of available services over the coming weeks.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

Transport operators and staff have been working hard to ensure that people who need to get to work are able to do so, including crucial NHS workers and all those on the frontline of the fight against the virus.

Alongside the cycling and walking revolution we are launching, and clear guidance to passengers and operators published today, we can all play our part by following the advice and reducing pressure on public transport.

If we take these steps, all those who need to use public transport should feel confident that they can do so safely, with the space to maintain social distancing as far as possible.

This follows the Transport Secretary announcing [a £2 billion package of cycling and walking investment](#) on Saturday that will deliver a green revolution in travel, easing the pressure on public transport services by helping more people than ever choose alternative forms of travel. This included £250 million for local authorities in England to create pop up bike lanes with protected space for cycling, wider pavements, safer junctions, and cycle and bus-only corridors.

The government's strategy and advice recognises that there will be times and some settings on public transport where social distancing is not possible. The new guidance outlines how people should try to minimise the duration of this, and take all necessary steps to observe these measures where possible.

[PM statement on coronavirus: 11 May 2020](#)

Good evening and thank you for joining us for this Downing Street press conference.

First of all, I want to update you on the latest data in our fight against coronavirus. I can report through the Government's ongoing testing and monitoring programme that, as of today:

- 1,921,770 tests for coronavirus have now been carried out in the UK, including 100,490 tests carried out yesterday;
- 223,060 people have tested positive, that's an increase of 3,877 cases since yesterday;
- 11,401 people are currently in hospital with coronavirus, down from 11,768 the previous day.
- And sadly, of those tested positive for coronavirus, across all settings, 32,065 have now died. That's an increase of 210 fatalities since yesterday. This figure includes deaths in all settings not just in hospitals.

Before we begin questions from the public and from the media I just want to remind people of a number of important things I said in my address to the nation last night.

First, in order to monitor our progress, we are establishing a new COVID Alert Level System. The COVID Alert Level has five levels, each relating to the level of threat posed by the virus. The level will be primarily determined by the R value and the number of coronavirus cases. In turn, that COVID Alert Level will determine the level of social distancing measures in place. The lower the level the fewer the measures; the higher the level the stricter the measures.

Throughout the period of lockdown which started on March 23rd we have been at Level 4 – meaning a Covid19 epidemic is in general circulation, and transmission is high or rising exponentially. Thanks to the hard work and sacrifices of the British people in this lockdown, we have helped to bring the R level down and we are now in a position to begin moving to Level 3, in steps.

And we have set out the first of three steps we will take to carefully modify the measures, gradually ease the lockdown, and begin to allow people to return to their way of life – but crucially while avoiding what would be a disastrous second peak that overwhelms the NHS.

After each step we will closely monitor the impact of that step on the R and the number of infections, and all the available data, and we will only take the next step when we are satisfied that it is safe to do so.

Step 1 – from this week:

- Those who cannot work from home should now speak to their employer about going back to work.
- You can now spend time outdoors and exercise as often as you like.
- You can meet one person outside of your household outside (outdoors), provided you stay 2 metres apart. The social distancing measures remain absolutely crucial to us keeping the infection rate and the number of cases down as low as we possibly can.

Step 2 – from June 1, at the earliest, as long as the data allows, we aim to allow:

- Primary schools to reopen for some pupils, in smaller class sizes;
- Non-essential retail to start to reopen, when and where it is safe to do so;
- Cultural and sporting events to take place behind closed doors, without crowds.

And then Step 3 – no earlier than July 4, and again, only if the data says it safe, we aim to allow:

More businesses and premises to open, including potentially those offering personal care such as leisure facilities, public places, and places of worship. Many of these businesses will need to operate in new ways to ensure they are safe, and we will work with these sectors on how to do this.

So, given we have taken the first step in carefully adjusting some of the measures today, and therefore our advice to people on what to do, we have also updated our messaging. We are now asking people to Stay Alert, Control the Virus and Save Lives.

Yes – staying alert, for the vast majority of people, still means staying at home as much as possible. But there are a range of other actions we're advising people to take as we modify measures.

People should Stay Alert, by:

- working from home if you can;
- limiting contact with other people;
- keeping distance if you go out – 2 metres apart where possible;
- washing your hands regularly;
- wearing a face covering when you are in enclosed spaces where it's difficult to be socially distant – for example in some shops and on public transport;
- and if you or anyone in your household has symptoms, you all need to self-isolate.

Because if everyone stays alert and follows the rules, we can control coronavirus by keeping the R down and reducing the number of infections. This is how we can continue to save lives, and livelihoods, as we begin as a nation to recover from coronavirus.

[Details on phased wider opening of](#)

schools, colleges and nurseries

Plans for schools, colleges and early years settings across England to potentially open to more children and young people have been set out today (11 May).

As the Prime Minister announced yesterday, by 1 June at the earliest primary schools in England may be able to welcome back children in key transition years – nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6.

Secondary schools, sixth forms and colleges will also work towards the possibility of providing some face-to-face contact with young people in Year 10 and Year 12 to help them prepare for exams next year.

However, as the PM has said, progress will be monitored every day. If the virus stays on the downward slope, and the R remains below 1, then – and only then – will it become safe to go further, move to the second step and reopen schools.

Early years settings may also be able to open for all children. The aim is for other primary years to return later in June, but this will be kept under review, and there are currently no plans to reopen secondary schools for other year groups before the summer holidays.

Priority groups, including vulnerable children and children of critical workers who have been eligible to attend throughout school closures, will continue to be able to attend schools, colleges and early years settings as they are currently.

The transmission rate has decreased, and the aim is that by 1 June at the earliest it will be safe for a greater number of children and young people to return to education and childcare. As a result, the Government is asking schools and childcare providers to plan on this basis, ahead of confirmation of the scientific advice.

This will only happen when the five key tests set by Government justify the changes at the time, including the rate of infection decreasing and the enabling programmes set out in the Roadmap operating effectively.

[Guidance to the sector](#), published today (11 May), sets out a range of protective measures to ensure education settings remain safe places, including:

- reducing the size of classes and keeping children in small groups without mixing with others
- staggered break and lunch times, as well as drop offs and pick ups
- increasing the frequency of cleaning, reducing the used of shared items and utilising outdoor space

Preparation for the potential reopening of schools will be part of the second phase of modifications to social distancing measures which the Prime Minister

set out yesterday – following more people returning to work in step one, and coming alongside the possible reopening of some non-essential retail in phase two.

The Government will continue to work closely with the sector in the build up to and following pupils' return.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

I know how hard schools, colleges, early years settings and parents are working to make sure children and young people can continue to learn at home, and I cannot thank them enough for that.

But nothing can replace being in the classroom, which is why I want to get children back to school as soon as it is safe to do so. The latest scientific advice indicates it will be safe for more children to return to school from 1 June, but we will continue to limit the overall numbers in school and introduce protective measures to prevent transmission.

This marks the first step towards having all young people back where they belong – in nurseries, schools and colleges – but we will continue to be led by the scientific evidence and will only take further steps when the time is right.

Whilst there will be no penalty for families who do not send their children to school, families will be strongly encouraged to take up these places – unless the child or a family member is shielding or the child is particularly vulnerable due to an underlying condition.

The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies advising the Government has a high degree of confidence that the severity of the disease in children is lower than in adults and a moderately high degree of confidence that children aged up to 11 are less susceptible to it.

All staff are already eligible for testing, and staff in shielding and high-risk groups should remain at home.

[From 1 June](#), all children and young people eligible to return to their settings will have access to testing, if they display symptoms, as will any symptomatic member(s) of their household.

This will enable children and staff to get back to school if they test negative, and if they test positive a test and trace approach can be taken. Where a setting has a positive case, Public Health England will advise on the appropriate course of action, and the relevant group of people with whom the individual has mixed closely, should be sent home and advised to self-isolate for 14 days.

Government launches new portal for care homes to arrange coronavirus testing

A [new online portal](#) that makes it easy for care homes to arrange deliveries of coronavirus test kits has been launched today.

As the national testing capacity has increased, the government is prioritising testing for care homes and other areas with the greatest need.

All symptomatic and asymptomatic care home staff and residents in England are now eligible for testing. Testing will be prioritised for care homes that look after the over 65s.

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care Matt Hancock said:

The additional testing capacity we have achieved delivers many thousands of tests a day for residents and staff in care homes.

This new portal allows those who book tests for staff and residents to do so even more easily, and it also offers a route for the prioritisation of care homes with the greatest need.

We will continue to grow our testing capacity, as we know the certainty and confidence that high quality testing can provide.

Minister of State for Care Helen Whately said:

Care homes are on the frontline in the fight against COVID-19 and we are determined that staff have everything they need to keep themselves and their residents safe. Testing is a crucial part of this. It helps prevent and control outbreaks and means steps can be taken to reduce the spread the virus and protect the most vulnerable.

By prioritising thousands of tests for care home staff and residents, we can target our national testing capacity in the areas and care homes with the greatest need.

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) is working with local authority Directors of Public Health, Directors of Adult Social Services and local NHS providers to deliver this testing programme for care homes.

Tens of thousands of care home workers and residents have already been tested, either by Public Health England or at drive-through testing sites, mobile testing units and via satellite testing kits – packages of tests sent to care homes for staff to use on residents.

Testing asymptomatic workers helps prevent and control outbreaks. It means those who test positive can be isolated, reducing the number of people who can spread the virus and protecting the most vulnerable. It also helps to build up a strategic understanding of the prevalence of the virus in local areas and the sector as a whole.

Test results for residents will be communicated to the care home managers. This information will also be provided to councils in order to help manage coronavirus outbreaks in local areas.

- Public Health England’s Health Protection Teams have, from the outset, been testing residents when an outbreak is reported at a particular care home. More than 45,000 residents have been tested through this route.
- On 20 April, the government began deliveries of test kits to care homes under the satellite programme. Since then, over 140,000 tests have been delivered to 4,387 care homes.
- On 28 April, the government announced that testing would be expanded in the care sector to include both symptomatic and asymptomatic care home staff and residents.
- The first time a care home suspects an outbreak of coronavirus, care home managers should contact their local health protection team to arrange testing. Subsequent testing will be through this DHSC programme.
- Care worker staff who are self-isolating, either because they or a member of their household has symptoms, should continue to use the [self-referral website](#) to book a home test or an appointment at a test site.
- Domiciliary care staff who need a test should also continue to use the [self-referral website](#) to request a home test or book an appointment at a test site.
- This programme is for England only and supplements the local systems already in place. We are working with the devolved administrations to support their needs around adult social care testing.
- Detailed guidance has been produced for care home managers. A tutorial video is also available to guide staff through the swab collection process:

[Coronavirus test tutorial for care homes with Dr Sarah Jarvis](#)