

Manchester surveyors wound-up after misleading clients

Ellis and Co Surveyors Limited, based in Stretford, Manchester, was wound-up in the public interest on 16 March 2020 at the High Court in Manchester before District Judge Obodai. The Official Receiver has been appointed liquidator of the company.

The court heard that Ellis and Co Surveyors Ltd was incorporated in July 2013 and began to cold call businesses by telephone, followed by a site visit, seeking to sign up businesses to a long-term contract.

Ellis and Co Surveyor's offer was to manage the client's business rates by making representations to the Valuations Office and secure reductions in the rateable value of the business.

The Insolvency Service, however, became aware of complaints about Ellis and Co Surveyors' activities and instigated confidential enquiries.

Investigators uncovered that the company's telesales team and field representatives made exaggerated claims to prospective clients about the likelihood of a successful appeal on their business rates, as well as the amount that would be saved.

Despite incomplete records provided by Ellis and Co Surveyors Ltd, investigators discovered that the company's success rate was no more than 15%, which contrasted to what clients were told.

Between 2014 and 2018, Ellis and Co Surveyors Ltd turned over £2.6 million using methods that exploited their clients.

Several clients who signed contracts with Ellis and Co Surveyors Ltd reported they found it difficult to engage with the company and received minimal progress on their case. Once contact with the surveyors had been made, clients complained that staff were rude, threatening and unprofessional.

Investigators also uncovered that when Ellis and Co Surveyors Ltd was incorporated, the company had appointed a director but this person was a decoy to conceal the identity of the person in control of the company.

The person who had been running the company behind the scenes, Joanne Boslem, admitted to investigators that she was only appointed as a director 5 years later in October 2018.

Joanne Boslem said that she wanted to hide her activities because she had been a principal shareholder in two similar companies – David Scott Surveyors Ltd and C & R Surveyors Limited – which at the time of Ellis and Co Surveyors' incorporation were being wound up in the courts for similar trading activities.

Scott Crighton, Chief Investigator for the Insolvency Service, said:

Companies are responsible for providing correct information to their clients and should not over-promise services they cannot guarantee. But this is exactly what Ellis and Co Surveyors Ltd did when they told prospective clients that they could reduce their business rates.

Our investigations proved that Ellis and Co Surveyors Ltd misled their clients and the court agreed in granting the application. By winding up Ellis and Co Surveyors Ltd, the Insolvency Service have put a stop to the company's activities, preventing further harm.

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

ELLIS & CO SURVEYORS LIMITED – company registration number 08601180 – was incorporated on 8 July 2013. The company's registered office is at Alexander Bursk, Parkgates, Bury New Road, Prestwich, Manchester, M25 0JW.

The petition was presented under s124A of the Insolvency Act 1986 on 3 December.

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 Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS). [Information about how to complain about a live company.](#)

[Information about the work of the Insolvency Service.](#)

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Published 17 March 2020

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109. 6 April 2020
News Release
110. 24 March 2020
News Article issued in March 2020.
111. 17 March 2020
First published.

[New-build homes to come gigabit-speed](#)

ready

Digital Secretary Oliver Dowden has today announced (Tuesday 17 March) the government will legislate to make sure new-build homes come with gigabit-speed broadband fit for the future.

This is a significant step in the Prime Minister's plan to level up the UK and accelerate the nationwide rollout of world-class broadband with the fastest speeds.

This will allow people to work from home more easily and will give homes fast and reliable connections for streaming TV and films on multiple devices at the same time.

One in five new-build homes are still being built without gigabit-speed connections, mostly in smaller developments, where the cost can be higher or network operators have not had the time they need to build in connections before completion.

The move will mean developers will be legally required to install high-quality digital infrastructure from the outset, make it a priority as part of the build, and ensure broadband companies are on board before the first brick is laid.

Digital Secretary Oliver Dowden said:

This legislation means every new home will be built fit for the future and give people access to world-class broadband speeds from the moment they move in.

It's all part of our plan to deliver on our commitment to give everyone in the UK access to gigabit broadband, as we connect and level up the country.

The government will amend building regulations to guarantee that all new homes have the right infrastructure to support gigabit broadband and housing developers must work with network operators to install internet speeds of over 1,000 megabits per second (Mbps) in new-build homes, up to a cost cap of £2,000 per dwelling.

The legislation, to be laid as soon as parliamentary time allows, will remove the need to retrospectively install broadband infrastructure and reduce disruption and high costs.

To make sure developers are incentivised to follow the plans, the government has worked with operators to secure significant new commitments that they will contribute to the costs of installing gigabit broadband in new-build homes.

Virgin Media will contribute at least £500 and in the case of some larger

sites £1,000. Openreach has committed to a combined contribution with developers of £3,400, with a maximum developer contribution of £2,000. The government expects to have agreement from other operators in the coming weeks.

Housing Secretary Robert Jenrick said:

We are building more new homes than at any time in the last 30 years and helping more people to get onto the ladder. We want to ensure those new homes are high quality and fit for the future.

Today's announcement will deliver internet speeds 200 times faster than you would need to watch an HD film on Netflix.

Clive Selley, CEO of Openreach, said:

Providing full fibre to new homes is an important part of Openreach's commitment to invest in faster, more reliable broadband technology – as part of our 'Fibre First' strategy.

We've been leading industry, progressively lowering the plot size threshold at which we offer free full fibre installation for new housing developments. This is now available to smaller developments of just 20 homes. In addition, we've capped the amount house builders contribute if they ask Openreach to build full fibre to smaller-scale developments of just 2 and 3 premises – to help encourage further full fibre take-up.

We welcome the government's announcement that all new build homes will be required to have the infrastructure to support gigabit-capable connections, and we will work closely with government and housebuilders on the best way to deliver this.

Lutz Schüler, CEO of Virgin Media, said:

Many property developers have been building brand new homes with second-rate broadband connections for far too long.

The Government should be applauded for introducing legislation to ensure every new home has access to future proof gigabit broadband as standard – something we've long called for. By busting these broadband barriers, government and industry can work together and ensure new homes are no longer left behind in the gigabit broadband revolution.

The policy, which will be laid as secondary legislation meaning it can be

introduced quicker, applies to all new residential dwellings, including conversions and self-built homes, but excluding renovated buildings, schools, hotels and prisons.

Government statistics estimate 215,000 new-build homes are built a year.

The government expects that 98.1 per cent of the time gigabit broadband will be installed at no costs to developers and that developers will have to contribute more than £1,800 for only 0.1 per cent of new builds.

With an assumed operator contribution of between £500-£1,400 this policy will ensure that currently, gigabit-capable connections will be deployed in 99% of total new build premises.

Alongside this, the government's Rural Gigabit Connectivity programme, which aims to see full fibre broadband delivered to the most remote parts of the UK, continues to work with partners and local bodies to deliver public sector upgrades in rural areas.

ENDS

Notes to editors

- In its response to the consultation *New Build Developments: Delivering gigabit-capable connections* published today the government has said it will use existing powers in the Building Act 1984 to amend the Building Regulations 2010 to mandate that:□
- Developers ensure new homes have gigabit broadband. This includes ensuring that the physical infrastructure necessary for gigabit-capable connections is provided on site for all new build developments and that the home is connected by an operator to a gigabit-capable connection. □
- The requirement on the developer to provide a gigabit-capable connection exists unless the cost to the developer of providing connectivity exceeds £2,000, or the operator declines to provide a connection. □
- If gigabit broadband exceeds the cost cap, the developer must provide at least superfast connection within the same cost cap, unless the operator declines to provide a connection.□
- Building regulations are a devolved matter. Therefore, the legislative amendments to the Building Regulations 2010 will apply to England only. However, the provision of gigabit-capable connections to new homes is a priority for the Government across the whole of the UK. We will therefore work closely with and the Devolved Administrations to help them implement this in a consistent manner across the UK.

New guidance for households with possible COVID-19 infection

New guidance to stay at home for 14 days if someone in your household has symptoms of COVID-19 is the focus of the next stage of a public awareness campaign launched by Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock today.

The new guidance will set out that individuals will still be asked to self-isolate for 7 days from the onset of COVID-19 symptoms but any individuals in the household will now be asked to self-isolate for 14 days from that moment as well.

If other members of your household develop symptoms, however mild, at any time during the 14 days, they must not leave the home for 7 days from when symptoms started.

The new phase of the campaign will build on the existing TV, radio, online, digital and billboard adverts currently visible all over the country. These reinforce the importance of washing your hands more often and for 20 seconds, and ask people to self-isolate for 7 days if they develop a high temperature or a new continuous cough, however mild.

Government has taken the further measure of asking whole households to isolate because it is likely that people living with others will infect each other or be infected already. Staying at home for 14 days will greatly reduce the overall amount of infection the household could pass on to others in the community.

The Prime Minister also today set out a number of social distancing measures to reduce the risk of infection from the spread of coronavirus. For those who remain well, are under 70 or do not have an underlying health condition, they are advised to limit their social contact where possible, including using less public transport, working at home and considering not going to pubs, restaurants, theatres and bars.

For those who are over 70, have an underlying health condition or are pregnant, they are strongly advised against these activities and to significantly limit face-to-face interaction with friends and family if possible.

The government's public awareness campaign offers clear, practical advice so people can play their part in preventing and slowing the spread of the virus.

The most important thing individuals can do to protect themselves remains washing their hands more often, for at least 20 seconds, with soap and water. Make sure you cough or sneeze into a tissue, put it in a bin and wash your hands.

The awareness campaign also reiterates the importance of seeking help online by visiting [NHS.UK/coronavirus](https://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus) to check your symptoms and follow the medical advice, rather than visiting your GP. It also urges people with any symptoms to avoid contact with older and more vulnerable people.

Only if symptoms become worse should people use the NHS 111 service. To ensure the phone service is readily available to those who need it, where possible people should use the 111 website rather than calling.

Earlier this month, the Prime Minister published a '[battle plan](#)' for tackling the disease in the UK, which sets out plans for a range of scenarios. Last week, the Prime Minister confirmed the UK has [moved into the second stage of this plan, the 'delay' phase](#).

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

Coronavirus is the biggest public health crisis we have faced in a generation, and we will do whatever is necessary to protect our elderly and most vulnerable people and keep the public safe.

This is an unprecedented situation and it's so important for each of us to rally together and do our bit to protect ourselves and each other, as well as our NHS, from this disease.

Washing hands regularly for 20 seconds or more remains the single most important thing each of us can do, but we now also need to ask everyone in a household to stay at home if anyone in their home shows symptoms.

Combating this virus will require a huge national effort. We must do all we can to save lives, protect the NHS and keep the most vulnerable people in our society safe.

[PM call with UK's leading manufacturers: 16 March 2020](#)

This evening, the Prime Minister spoke to over sixty of the UK's leading manufacturing businesses and organisations to call on them to help the UK step up production of vital medical equipment, such as ventilators. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster also joined the call.

The Prime Minister made clear that responding to coronavirus and reducing the spread of the peak requires a national effort. He asked manufacturers to rise to this immediate challenge by offering skills and expertise as well as manufacturing the components themselves. Businesses can get involved in any

part of the process: design, procurement, assembly, testing, and shipping.

“He set the ambition for industry to manufacture as many new ventilators as possible, so we can all help the most vulnerable and our NHS, whose staff have been working round the clock. The government Chief Commercial Officer and Commercial Director from the NHS set out the clinical and design specifications. The government will remain in contact with businesses on anything further that the NHS might need to respond to the virus.

The Prime Minister thanked manufacturers for everything they have done so far. A number of companies are already engaged in the effort and exploring how they can best support. Any business who is able to help should get in touch, by phoning the BEIS Business Support Helpline on 0300 456 3565 or visiting <https://ventilator.herokuapp.com>.

The Business Support Helpline has already received over 400 calls from businesses looking for information on how they can contribute to the Prime Minister’s call for ventilator production.

The Prime Minister also set out that the government will do everything we can to support businesses during this difficult time.