

SLC Executive Director of Operations visits Durham University

Members of SLC's Executive Leadership Team have been visiting universities across the UK, meeting with staff and students to find out about their experience of using SLC's services.

At the end of February, Derek Ross, SLC Executive Director of Operations spent the day at Durham University. He was joined by colleagues from SLC's Partner Services Team who manage the relationship between SLC and universities and colleges. Derek reflects on the visit in his blog.

As Executive Director of Operations, I am very conscious of the need to continue to improve the service we provide to our customers. Feedback from those who use our services is crucial to this, which is why I was delighted to visit Durham University as part of SLC's ongoing engagement programme with UK Universities.

The visit started with a meeting with Durham Vice Chancellor, Professor Stuart Corbridge, and other members of the University's senior team. During the meeting I updated them on the enhancements we have planned for the next couple of years, including the roll out of an improved digital self-service system for students. We talked about how this would make it easier for customers to get answers to straightforward enquiries and enhance our customer advisors' ability to support individuals with more complex circumstances.

This was followed by a meeting with Operations staff from the university and I was glad to hear that their experience of working with SLC was generally very positive. They had encouraging feedback around recent improvements we've made, including the new childcare process introduced last year. This sees us pay Childcare Grants directly to childcare providers, removing the need for students to estimate their costs for the year ahead. It's good to know that this has been working well for Durham students.

A highlight of the visit was the opportunity to attend focus groups with undergraduate and postgraduate students. During these sessions students asked specific questions relating to their own situations. The questions covered a range of topics including parental contribution, postgraduate funding rules and evidence requirements.

One student, who was not from the UK, told me about issues they had experienced when providing evidence to support their application. I outlined the improvements we have planned which will allow students to submit their evidence digitally. Everyone welcomed this development, agreeing that it would make the application process more efficient in the future.

I left Durham University feeling very positive about the job SLC is doing in enabling people to invest in their future through higher education, but also

with lots of lots of constructive feedback on areas we can improve on. I look forward to continuing with the HE engagement programme and visiting more universities in the very near future.

Derek Ross, Executive Director, Operations

Coronavirus advice for rights applicants

The IPO will take whatever measures we can to support rights applicants and their attorneys who have been affected.

Can deadlines be extended?

The IPO will extend time periods where national and international legislation allows. We are willing to support affected customers using the discretionary powers available to us.

Extensions of time

The IPO is willing to consider requests for extensions of time as favourably as possible on a case-by-case basis.

Loss of rights due to failure to meet a time period

Where a failure to meet a time period has resulted in a loss of rights, those rights may be reinstated or restored in certain circumstances.

The UK's intellectual property legislation does not provide any single provision for all situations that may arise. Legal provisions depend on the nature of the late response and the circumstances of the delay. IPO staff can explain the options available and how reinstatement or restoration procedures work.

For more information or to request an extension, customers should:

- contact the named officer or section dealing with their application
 - contact the IPO Information Centre at Information@ipo.gov.uk or telephone on 0300 300 2000
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Suffragan See of Sherwood: 11 March 2020

The Queen has approved the nomination of the Reverend Doctor Andrew Neil Emerton BSc, BTh, DPhil, Dean of St Mellitus College, in the Diocese of London to the Suffragan See of Sherwood, in the Diocese of Southwell and Nottingham, in succession to the Right Reverend Anthony Porter BA MA who is due to retire on 22nd March 2020.

Andy was educated at York University, and Queens College, Oxford and trained for ministry at Ridley Hall, Cambridge. He served his title at Holy Trinity Brompton in the Diocese of London and was ordained Priest in 2006.

In 2008, Andy was appointed as Assistant Dean, St Mellitus College and in 2015 Andy took up his current roles as Dean, St Mellitus College and Principal, St Paul's Theological Centre.

Health supplements bosses banned for 21 years

Ramakant Lal, Melvine Elias D'Silva and Soriyano DSouza each signed 7-year disqualification undertakings. From 2 March 2020, the trio are banned from acting as directors or directly or indirectly becoming involved, without the permission of the court, in the promotion, formation or management of a company.

Melvine D'Silva (44) is from Hounslow, West London, while his fellow directors, Soriyano DSouz (35) and Ramakant Lal (37), are from Mumbai, India.

The three bosses were directors of Vivid Lifestyle Limited, a health supplements company incorporated in July 2013. The company, however, was wound-up in the courts five years later in August 2018 following confidential enquiries after the Insolvency Service received complaints about Vivid Lifestyle's activities.

Investigators discovered that throughout the life of the company, the three directors had allowed Vivid Lifestyle to trade with a lack of commercial probity and failed to provide suitable governance over their sales agents.

The company used an overseas call centre to sell the health supplements but without proper supervision, the sales agents pursued high-pressure sales tactics to dupe vulnerable people into buying the products.

Sales agents often misled customers in thinking they were medically trained, had appropriate medical qualifications or worked with the NHS. Call centre staff also wrongfully claimed they were existing health care providers or were calling on behalf of a government organisation.

Without effective supervision, Ramakant Lal, Melvine Elias D'Silva and Soriyano Dsouza allowed the call centre to act in a reckless manner while selling Vivid Lifestyle's health supplements. The mental wellbeing of potential customers was not considered and assessments didn't take place to determine whether the supplements were harmful if used in conjunction with existing medication.

The three directors failed to ensure customer credit card and bank details were used for their intended purpose. In their undertakings, Ramakant Lal, Melvine Elias D'Silva and Soriyano Dsouza also did not dispute that they had received 17 complaints from customers who had payments taken from them for goods they either did not order, did not receive or were pursued for additional payments.

Investigators calculated that Vivid Lifestyle secured more than £1.9 million from just over 11,000 customers.

Martin Gitner, Deputy Head of Investigations for the Insolvency Service, said:

As directors, it was entirely down to Ramakant Lal, Melvine Elias D'Silva and Soriyano Dsouza to supervise the activities of the call centre they had contracted to sell their products. Without that proper oversight, sales agents were left to their own devices and carried out aggressive and reckless sales tactics, often against vulnerable people.

Their conduct as directors was completely unacceptable and these substantial bans, along with the courts approval to liquidate Vivid Lifestyle, should put a stop to their misconduct, while protecting vulnerable people from further harm.

Melvine Elias D'Silva's date of birth is May 1975.

Ramakant Lal's date of birth is December 1982.

Soriyano Dsouza's date of birth is August 1984.

Vivid Lifestyle Ltd (Company number: 08610085)

Persons subject to a disqualification order are bound by a [range of restrictions](#).

[Further information about the work of the Insolvency Service, and how to complain about financial misconduct.](#)

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on:

DIO announces Nuclear Technical Support Provider framework suppliers

ACA (Atkins Cavendish Alliance), KAD (KBR, Assystem, Doosan Babcock) and Nuvia have been chosen following a procurement process which included a measurement of collaboration and behaviours. The decision is subject to contract award, which is expected next month.

NTSP is a 7 year framework, with the option of a further 3 years, that will deliver specialist nuclear technical services valued between £250-million to £400-million to support DIO, Navy Command and other MOD organisations.

The framework will support the Clyde Infrastructure Programme (CIP) and wider Royal Navy and defence requirements. Its primary focus will be on delivering the refurbishment and upgrade of critical infrastructure at HMNB Clyde.

Charles Hoskins, DIO's Clyde Infrastructure Programme Director, said:

The NTSP is vitally important to the delivery of our major infrastructure programme and wider operations at HMNB Clyde. We welcome all companies from our new NTSP delivery partners to our infrastructure family within the Clyde Community.

We look forward to them joining our delivery team and our collaborative approach that we are embedding into all work we undertake at HMNB Clyde. The expertise and collaborative approach from our new partners will be crucial to our success as we move forward into the exciting and challenging next chapter of our programme.