

CMA finds evidence of serious issues in leasehold selling

As part of a probe into the industry, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) is concerned that leasehold homeowners have been unfairly treated and prospective buyers misled by housing developers.

These concerns include:

- Ground rents: homeowners having to pay escalating ground rents, which in some cases can double every 10 years. This increase is often built into contracts, meaning people can often struggle to sell their homes and find themselves trapped.
- Cost of the freehold: the CMA has seen evidence that people have been misled about the cost of converting their leasehold to freehold ownership. When buying their home, some people were told the freehold would cost only a small sum, but later down the line this price had increased by thousands of pounds with little to no warning.
- Misleading information: not being told upfront that a property is leasehold and what that means. Some developers are failing to explain the differences between leasehold and freehold when directly asked, and some actually tell potential buyers that there is no difference. By the time people find out the realities of owning a leasehold, including the regular charges to be paid, they are often unable to pull out of the purchase, or would face significant difficulties if they tried to do so.
- Unreasonable fees: being charged excessive and disproportionate fees for things like the routine maintenance of a building's shared spaces or making home improvements. If people want to challenge such charges, the process is often difficult and costly, meaning few people decide to go through with it.

Andrea Coscelli, the CMA's Chief Executive, said:

"We have found worrying evidence that people who buy leasehold properties are being misled and taken advantage of.

"Buying a home is one of the most important and expensive investments you can make, and once you're living there you want to feel secure and happy. But for thousands of leasehold homeowners, this is not the case.

"We'll be looking carefully at the problems we've found, which include escalating ground rents and misleading information, and will be taking our

own enforcement action directly in the sector shortly.”

The CMA is now completing all the necessary legal work to launch direct enforcement action against companies it believes have broken consumer protection law. This could result in firms signing legal commitments to change how they do business. If they fail to make the required changes, the CMA could take action through the courts to make them comply with the law.

The evidence found by the CMA also supports the case for changes to the law in this area. The CMA will continue to work with the Government on its reform plans for the leasehold market, including supporting the move to ban the sale of new leasehold houses and reduce ground rents for new leases to zero.

As part of its work, the CMA is developing consumer advice for people who own, or are looking to buy, a leasehold property. This will offer tips on what they can do when faced with permission fees and service charges they consider unjustified.

All information relating to this investigation can be found on the [leasehold case page](#).

Notes to editors:

- For further information please contact the press office via press@cma.gov.uk or on 020 3738 6460.

[£20 million to connect communities across the country with new railway stations](#)

- government focused on strengthening rail connections by investing in new and restoring disused stations
- part of government’s £500 million drive to reverse Beeching cuts of the 1960s and reopen essential rail links
- ten new stations across the country have already been built, attracting over a million passenger journeys

Towns and cities could see new stations constructed and disused links restored to their former glory, the Rail Minister has confirmed today (28 February 2020), thanks to a £20 million fund to boost rail connections across the country.

This forms just one part of the government’s [£500 million drive to reopen former routes and stations closed during the Beeching cuts](#) and marks its commitment to levelling up transport infrastructure across the country to

improve links between communities and unlock economic growth for towns, cities and regions, so everyone can access the opportunities they need to thrive.

Passengers have already benefited from funding to build new stations, including in Wales, Derbyshire, Exeter, Warrington and Warwickshire, with more new stations soon to be built in Durham, Reading and Bristol.

Local authorities can [bid for the funding](#), with communities across the country encouraged to apply.

Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris said:

Disused railway stations have been emblematic of left behind towns for too long.

The vast number of passengers already using new stations funded by government is proof of the importance of investing in new connections.

This new funding will both restore local stations to their former glory, and build even more new ones, establishing vital links for communities and levelling up the country for everyone.

The new £20 million funding is the third round of the New Stations Fund, and follows the launch of the £500 million Reversing Beeching Fund, which aims to bring back the rail connections needed to level up access to opportunity and support local economies to flourish.

£40 million of funding has already been invested in building 10 new stations across the country, attracting over a million passenger journeys.

In 2017 a new station was opened at Ilkeston in Derbyshire, the largest town in England to have an active passenger railway line passing through it without any railway station to service it. All 3 of its previous railway stations, Ilkeston North, Ilkeston Town, and Ilkeston Junction and Cossall, had been closed during the 1950s and 1960s.

[Experts to help tackle poor behaviour in schools](#)

A new team of experts are set to help schools curb unruly behaviour and prevent disruption in the classroom.

Schools with exemplary behaviour practices are being invited to lead the

Government's £10 million programme to improve discipline, as part of work to raise school standards across the country.

Supported by renowned behaviour experts, these schools will work in partnership with those that need help to turn around their behaviour culture, equipping heads and senior leaders with the tools they need to tackle poor discipline.

They will help schools which are facing challenges to look at ways of improving behaviour including setting high standards for all pupils, de-escalating conflict and considering things like mobile phone bans, while recognising that different schools require different approaches.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Pupils learn best in an environment where there are no excuses for bad behaviour and high expectations are set for all pupils. Poor discipline disrupts lessons, holds children back and has a profound effect on teachers.

All over the country we see examples of schools with great behaviour cultures achieving incredible things for their pupils – as we level up standards in our schools, I want that to be the norm.

That's why we are determined to give all schools the tools they need to improve behaviour by making sure that they can learn from the best.

The behaviour hubs build on the work of Ofsted, which inspects how well teachers are trained to manage behaviour in new teacher training inspections. This supports the Government's manifesto pledge to back heads and teachers on discipline.

These plans aim to reduce disruption that can impact on all pupils' education and help teachers get on with their jobs. Headteachers will also continue to be backed to use exclusions where they are warranted, with a focus on raising the quality of alternative provision to improve outcomes for excluded children.

Tom Bennett, the Department for Education's behaviour adviser, will be assisted in running the scheme by a team of current and former headteachers and school leaders with experience in implementing successful behaviour management practices in primary, secondary, special and alternative provision settings.

From today (28 February), schools can apply to be one of the lead schools who will work closely with these expert advisers to achieve real change in schools' approaches to managing behaviour.

The full list of advisers is below:

1. Tom Bennett, author of 2017 Department for Education Review of Behaviour and Founder of researchED.
2. Mark Emmerson, Chief Executive Officer of City of London Academy Trust in London and formerly Principal of Stoke Newington School, The City Academy, Hackney and City of London Academy Islington.
3. Marie Gentles, Co-Director of Magic Behaviour Management and former Principal of Hawkswood AP Primary in London.
4. Michelle Long, Executive Principal at Dixons Academy Trust and Principal of Dixons Music Primary in Bradford.
5. Jayne Lowe, Director of Bright Green Learning, Education Adviser, former PRU headteacher and currently supporting Ministry of Justice on 'Transforming Youth Custody'.
6. Charlie Taylor, Chair of the Youth Justice Board, Former Chief Executive of National College for Teaching and Leadership and former head of special school The Willows School Academy Trust in London.
7. Jenny Thompson, Principal of Dixons Trinity Academy in Bradford.

The programme aims to recruit up to 20 lead schools in this application round, with plans to support at least 500 schools over the three-year programme. The first wave of lead schools will be matched up with partner schools and begin work in September this year.

Tom Bennett, the Department for Education's lead behaviour adviser, said:

Good behaviour is central to everything we want to achieve for students. It's the difference between safe, calm schools where students and staff can flourish and learn, and schools where students endure disruption or worse.

There are some incredible schools out there making miracles happen every day, but many schools who, often through no fault of their own, face huge challenges getting there. Behaviour hubs will support these schools with the schools who know how to turn things around. I'm proud to lead this programme and look forward to seeing it make a difference to the students and staff who need and deserve it.

Leora Cruddas, CEO of the Confederation of Schools Trust, said:

Good standards of behaviour in a school are essential to pupil safety and success. Every child has the right to go to a school where they feel safe and able to learn.

Establishing and sustaining a culture of good behaviour can be challenging, which is why CST welcomes the announcement about the lead behaviour school and trust recruitment process. Identifying those schools and trusts with strong cultures of good behaviour will enable the system to share the strongest educational philosophies and practices.

Chris Keates, Acting General Secretary of NASUWT said:

The NASUWT has always been clear that teachers cannot teach and pupils cannot learn without good order and discipline in our schools. The Union's experience confirms that while there are many examples of excellent practice across the education system, some schools require further support to secure and sustain high standards of pupil behaviour.

Behaviour hubs have the potential to identify ways that schools can learn from and support each other in maintaining and improving pupil discipline. The NASUWT looks forward to engaging further with the DfE on this promising initiative.

Schools interested in signing up to lead the programme can find more information on the Behaviour Hubs Programme page on GOV.UK.

[Government to improve road journeys across the country with £93 million investment and cutting-edge transport tech](#)

- 32 local authorities awarded share of £93.4 million to repair roads and bridges
- a further £900,000 will fund scientists, innovators, academics and tech-focused start-ups to research new ways to future proof the UK's roads
- latest push by government to level up connectivity, by helping councils fix key infrastructure, tackling congestion and improving journeys

Communities around the country are set to benefit from a £93 million boost to connectivity, ensuring England's roads are fit for the 21st century.

Roads Minister Baroness Vere has announced today (28 February 2020) that 32 local authorities will receive investment for essential repair works, levelling up infrastructure, cutting congestion, improving road conditions and making journeys easier.

This includes over £4 million for crucial repairs to the New Elvet Bridge in Durham along with £3.7 million to help refurbish several steel bridges around Northumberland.

This comes as government boosts UK innovators through a £900,000 investment

to fund cutting-edge research projects aimed at creating a better transport system – the first of which include world-leading innovations to spot and repair potholes.

Roads Minister Baroness Vere said:

There is nothing more frustrating than a journey delayed by poor road conditions, and this multi-million pound boost will help improve connectivity across the country.

This investment will not only help local areas to target current pinch points on their roads, but will also harness our world-leading research and innovation capabilities to future proof the next generation of journeys.

One of the projects to receive funding for tech projects will see the development of a new AI-powered app to detect potholes in real-time, using mobile phone sensors to measure when cyclists ride over or swerve to avoid them. It is hoped the app will help local authorities to quickly identify when potholes are forming and take quicker action to fill them.

Another project known as Shape-Pot will create 3D pothole models to create a fully autonomous repair platform capable of automatic, uniform repairs – accelerating the transport network of the future.

Senior Lecturer at the University of Liverpool Paolo Paoletti said:

The Shape-Pot project has the potential to change the way roads and their defects are managed, promoting a data-driven approach to management and improving efficiency – making roads safer and more accessible.

Thanks to the T-TRIG funding, the team will create a proof-of-principle autonomous robotic platform to characterise road surface, a first step toward autonomous maintenance of roads.

Today's announcement is the latest in the government's drive for a transport revolution, and is part of over £6.6 billion awarded between 2015 and 2021 to improve the condition of the local highway networks.

[New support plan to improve jails](#)

- HMP Wormwood Scrubs, Bedford and Feltham among first to benefit
- more staff, new technology and maintenance improvements will play key

part

- will build on success of 10 Prisons Project with a data-driven approach

The Prison Performance Support Programme (PPSP) replaces Special Measures, and will offer a significant package of tailored support managed from a dedicated operations room.

Building on lessons learned from the [10 Prisons Project](#), a small number of chosen jails will be boosted by measures including additional staff, enhanced standards training and tough airport-style security, in order to bring stability.

Prisons and Probation Minister Lucy Frazer QC MP, said:

We know that some prisons face deep-rooted issues that cannot be fixed overnight, which is why this programme will be vital to support and improve them.

This co-ordinated, intensive support represents a step up in our response to the long-term challenges affecting certain jails.

Allied to the £2.75 billion this government is investing to transform the estate, improve security and promote rehabilitation, this is another way in which we will drive up standards.

Six prisons – HMPs Pentonville, Wormwood Scrubs, Bedford, Bristol, Hewell and Feltham A – will initially receive this bespoke support, and have been chosen following a detailed assessment.

The jails will benefit from additional funding to improve living and working conditions, and a Standards Coaching Team will develop staff confidence and skills – something that proved successful during the 10 Prisons Project.

PJ Butler, Governor at HMP Bedford, said:

As the Governor of one of our most challenging prisons, I appreciate the support being given to me and my team by the Prison Performance Support Programme. The investment in modern technology and additional resources will greatly help us to restrict the supply of drugs and other illicit items, which cause misery and harm.

Our aim at Bedford is to return responsible citizens, not offenders, to their communities and the PPSP will help us to do this.

PPSP will use data to focus on reducing violence and self-harm with the aim of raising standards as quickly as possible. It will be overseen by an operations room team at Prison Service HQ, that will work closely with staff on the ground.

As the programme progresses, there will be continued analysis of other prisons across the estate, and support will be adapted accordingly. Depending on what is determined using the data and operational judgement, prisons will move in and out of PPSP according to greatest need.

The initiative will sit alongside the government's £2.75 billion commitment to transform the prison estate with:

- £100 million to bolster prison security, clamping down on the weapons, drugs and mobile phones that fuel violence, self-harm and crime behind bars
- £2.5 billion to provide 10,000 additional prison places and create modern, efficient jails that rehabilitate offenders, reduce reoffending and keep the public safe
- £156 million to tackle the most pressing maintenance issues to create safe and decent conditions for offender rehabilitation