

FCO statement on Venezuela

The United Kingdom condemns the steps taken by the Maduro regime to forcibly block and frustrate the democratic process of the Venezuelan National Assembly on 5th January.

Their attempts to prevent the re-election of Juan Guaidó ignore the interests of both the country and its people, undermine respect for democratic institutions and principles, and the rule of law. The Assembly must be allowed to operate legally and to fulfil its responsibilities without fear or impediment.

The United Kingdom underlines its support for interim constitutional President Guaidó and his efforts to lead Venezuela towards a peaceful and democratic resolution of the appalling crisis the country is facing.

Letter to the ACMD to review GHB and GBL

The letter from the Home Secretary, Rt Hon Priti Patel MP, asks the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs to review the classification of gamma-hydroxybutyric acid (GHB) and gamma-butyrolactone (GBL) and closely related compounds under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 and the scheduling of both drugs under the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001.

HR Sports Academy CIC

HR Sports Academy is a community interest company (CIC) set up in 2010 by Mickela Hall-Ramsay. It aims to empower young people by providing a cohesive community where they can thrive and develop their skills.

Mickela's inspiration

There are many reasons why entrepreneurs launch their businesses.

For Mickela, it was a combination of her love of sport together with upsetting personal circumstances that inspired her to launch HR Sports Academy:

I wanted to start the company because my sister, who had Down's Syndrome, suddenly passed away in 2007 and at the time youth crime was really high.

I was in my second year at university and even though I was going through this tremendous pain, I couldn't imagine what families were going through as a result of losing a loved one due to youth crime.

So, after finishing university, I did a master's degree and my mum had set up a community interest company in memory of my sister and that inspired me to do something for my community.

Getting down to business

Mickela began researching how to start her enterprise, weighing-up the benefits of incorporating as a certain type of [business structure](#).

She decided that a CIC was the best fit for her and the direction she wanted to drive her company. When asked why, she said:

One of the reasons why I decided to register as a CIC is because it allowed me to have that flexibility of applying for grants and have that financial stability and freedom to actually generate money to help us to develop a sustainable business.

Another reason is because there are not so many regulations to follow as a CIC. We've got a lot more freedom to do what we want to do as an organisation.

It was not long until the business started to take off. More children started attending the evening and weekend sessions and an increased number of schools reached out to Mickela to find ways of working together.

But as her business grew, Mickela began to realise that there was much more to being a company director than she originally thought:

There's loads of legal things that I didn't really know about in addition to the day-to-day running of the business – so payroll, managing staff, hiring staff, sorting insurance.

I suppose the list of my responsibilities as a director is endless!

Overcoming challenges

To overcome her challenges, Mickela took advantage of the [support available from the British Library for aspiring young entrepreneurs](#).

For Mickela, one of the biggest challenges she has had to overcome as a young

entrepreneur is finding the right staff who embody the organisation's core values:

At the moment, we have an amazing team because we have a lot of young people who have come through our system who want to work for us, which has been perfect.

But at the beginning, it was trying to find that right person to enable us to develop an organisation which really delivered the same message to everybody and provided an excellent service.

The team at HR Sports Academy

In addition to this, Mickela also says funding was a challenge:

Ensuring that we had enough capital to keep things going but also keep prices down for our customers was a challenge.

A lot of the time when we first started, I didn't pay myself for months, simply because the funding or the money had to be used to ensure other expenses were covered first.

In the beginning, receiving late invoices for our services was a massive issue, because we didn't necessarily have a reserve to support us if a client paid late and we needed to pay our staff and bills for insurance or venues.

Despite facing challenges, HR Sports Academy has grown into a successful business, right at the heart of the community where it was founded. Mickela says community support has played a huge role in this:

A lot of people love what we do and want to get involved.

A lot of the schools we have relationships with will push our work to other schools and outside into the wider community.

Parents refer other parents to us. People in the local community have also nominated HR Sports Academy for awards, which has helped to develop our recognition and give us that stamp of approval that people like to see when they're sending their children to a service.

A word of advice

HR Sports Academy has grown from strength-to-strength since it was registered in 2010.

Having launched the business nearly 10 years ago, Mickela has had time to reflect on her entrepreneurship journey. She has a few tips for any young entrepreneurs who are trying to make their business dreams become a reality:

It's really important to research what you're doing and to gain experience in the field that you want.

I'd also say networking is something you should do. I started a lot later and I kick myself every single day about it – so networking and developing partnerships with people is key.

It's important to dream big and work hard. There's a lot of sayings about working smart – I believe you can work smart but if you work smart and work hard, you're able to do a lot more.

You can [watch an interview with Mickela Hall-Ramsay](#) on Youtube.

Stay up to date with the latest tips and success stories by visiting the [Companies House blog](#) and following #GetBizzy on social media.

[Civil news: check live case work with new status report service](#)

Weekly reports are now being emailed to providers showing the status of all live cases in the Client and Cost Management System (CCMS).

This is a new service beginning on 6 January 2020. It has been introduced following feedback from providers. The aim is to keep you up to date with the status of all your live work in CCMS.

What do the reports show?

The spreadsheets outline all your active cases in CCMS and what stage they are in the system.

You will be able to see if you need to take any action within CCMS or if the application is being processed by the LAA.

Who will receive the reports?

The reports will be sent to your 'primary contact liaison manager' as specified in Contracted Work and Administration (CWA).

If you do not receive your report you should check that you have the correct

details in CWA before contacting your contract manager.

Further information

BIT@Justice.gov.uk – to contact the business improvement team for questions about the content of your report

Brothers sentenced for £1.48 million electronic waste fraud

Brothers Jamil and Saleem Rehman received custodial sentences at Birmingham Crown Court (Thursday 19 December) following an Environment Agency prosecution into a £1.48 million fraud case involving electronic waste.

Jamil Rehman, aged 56 of Monkspath, Solihull, was sentenced to 5 years and 4 months in custody while his brother Saleem, aged 55 of Shirley, Solihull, received a 16 month custodial sentence suspended for 2 years.

Between January 2011 and December 2012, Jamil Rehman, who was the sole director at Electronic Waste Specialists Ltd (EWS), submitted fictitious claims for the recycling of approximately 10,600 tonnes of electronic waste with the company receiving payment to the value of £1.48 million from a producer compliance scheme, Weelight Ltd.

EWS's services were contracted by Weelight Ltd as an approved authorised treatment facility. The company created forged paperwork which detailed fictitious recycling.

The fraud came to light when the Environment Agency's National Investigations Team became suspicious of the paperwork that EWS, which operated out of a warehouse in Devon Street, Nechells, Birmingham, had submitted.

At a hearing on 23 January 2019, Jamil Rehman pleaded guilty to 1 charge of fraudulent trading. On the same date, Saleem Rehman pleaded guilty to a charge of theft from the company.

At a hearing on 19 December 2019, Jamil Rehman was sentenced to 5 years and 4 months in custody and disqualified from acting as a company director for 10 years. Saleem Rehman received a 16 month custodial sentence suspended for 2 years.

During the proceedings, the Environment Agency undertook a surveillance operation in relation to Jamil Rehman as he asserted he was not fit to plead.

Video evidence was obtained that showed him driving. In addition, further evidence was obtained showing that he had hired HGV vehicles in 2018 and

2019.

Jamil Rehman applied to vacate his plea but there was inadequate defence medical evidence to support the application.

His brother, Saleem, the court heard, stole approximately £36,000 from the company account, spending the money on foreign travel, school fees and car hire.

EWS Ltd went into voluntary liquidation in 2014 with debts of over £116,000.

Speaking after the case, the Environment Agency officer in charge of the investigation, said:

The Environment Agency has a specialist crime unit using intelligence to track and prosecute organised crime groups involved in illegal waste activity.

This case sends out a clear message that we will not hesitate to take action against anyone operating illegally.

Waste crime is a serious issue diverting as much as £1 billion per annum from legitimate business and the treasury. Since April 2011 the Environment Agency has invested £65.2 million in tackling it.

Waste companies, local authorities and businesses all have a responsibility to check what happens to their waste. If you suspect that a company is doing something wrong, you can call the Environment Agency on 0800 80 70 60 or report it anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.