

Mark Drakeford announces details of High Street Rates Relief Scheme

The scheme will support almost 15,000 shops, restaurants, pubs and cafes, including those which have seen their rates increase as a result of the independent Valuation Office Agency's (VOA) revaluation, which comes into effect on April 1.

The high street rates relief scheme will also provide support to other retailers – some of whom have seen their rates decrease as a result of revaluation – who are struggling in the face of economic conditions and competition from online and out-of-town providers.

Eligible retailers will receive up to £1,500 off their non-domestic rates bill if they have a rateable value of £50,000 or less in the 2017 18 financial year.

To maximise the amount of support which can be provided and ensure it is targeted at areas and businesses most in need, there will be two tiers of relief available.

The first tier of relief will apply to high street retailers with a rateable value of between £6,001 and £12,000 who are already receiving either small business rates relief (SBRR) or transitional rates relief. They will receive a reduction in their rates bill of £500 or, if their bill is less than £500, it will be reduced to nil.

The second tier of relief will apply to eligible high street retailers with a rateable value of between £12,001 and £50,000 which are experiencing a rates increase from April 1. These ratepayers will receive a reduction in their rates bill of £1,500.

They will receive a higher level of support to reflect the fact they are not receiving other support, such as SBRR, and may be facing large increases in their rates following the revaluation.

High street rates relief is unique to Wales and will provide crucial support to small and medium businesses at this time – it is estimated that this will benefit almost 15,000 businesses.

The targeted rates relief scheme will be provided through a special grant made to each local authority.

Announcing the details today, Professor Drakeford said:

“Some retailers across Wales are concerned about increases in their rates as a result of the VOA's revaluation.

“We are therefore providing a further £10m to help businesses in

those communities which have been adversely affected.

“This new scheme is in addition to the £10m transitional relief scheme, which will also be available from April 1 and the £100m tax cut for small businesses in Wales provided by small business rates relief. It will provide vital support to ratepayers on high streets across Wales and offer these businesses extra support.

“Work is already underway to develop a new permanent small business rates relief scheme for 2018. We are listening to the feedback we have received so we can make the scheme as fair, reasonable and transparent as possible.”

The Welsh Government has been working closely with local authorities to develop the scheme and prepare for its implementation.

Retailers can find out whether they are eligible for the high street rates relief scheme in 2017-18 by contacting their local authority. Accompanying guidance will be provided to local authorities to support the effective administration of the relief.

Ben Cottam, Head of External Affairs for FSB Wales, said:

“We welcome that the Welsh Government has made good on its commitment to easing the pressure on high street businesses affected by the introduction of new levels of business rates. We also welcome the Government’s engagement with FSB on this issue in recent months. We would now encourage local authorities to engage quickly with businesses to ensure that all those who are entitled to this relief receive it as quickly and simply as possible.

“This will go some way to providing breathing space for many businesses whom we know have been concerned about the impact of new rates bills on their business.”

[Press release: Government support for more than 19,000 victims of domestic abuse](#)

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid has today (17 February 2017) confirmed that 76 projects across the country will receive a share of £20 million to support victims of domestic abuse, creating more than 2,200 new bed spaces in refuges and other specialist accommodation.

This will support more than 19,000 victims with somewhere safe to live and rebuild their lives, and provide further access to education, employment and life skills training.

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid said:

Domestic abuse is a devastating crime that all too often remains hidden. That's why we're determined that no victim will be turned away from the help they need, at the time they need it.

This significant investment shows our clear commitment to supporting and strengthening a resilient network of refuge services across the country, with further specialist support to help victims go on to rebuild their lives.

Last November, the government published its "Priorities for Domestic Abuse Services" setting out what local areas need to put in place to make sure their approach to domestic abuse is collaborative, robust and effective.

This latest funding has been awarded to local areas that will deliver on these priorities – for example by working collaboratively across local authority boundaries and with other partners, including specialist domestic violence service providers to strengthen support.

The funding will support a wide range of services and safe accommodation, including refuges, outreach services, Sanctuary Schemes, which help those at risk of violence to stay safe in their own homes through improved security measures and mainstream local authority accommodation.

Given that victims of domestic abuse will have different needs, many of the projects being supported are tailored towards support for specific groups including women with mental health issues, substance abuse problems, or the particular needs of different ethnic minority communities.

Communities Minister Lord Bourne said:

Domestic abuse ruins lives with many victims forced to leave their homes for their own safety and to access the services they urgently need.

Real change will only happen at the local level and it's these authorities that are best placed to identify the best solutions. We're clear that the victim must always come first and must always be able to access the specialist accommodation help and support they need.

Case studies

Newcastle City Council

This project will look to improve and strengthen the availability of and access to refuges alongside other specialist accommodation including self-contained flats. This will be matched with improved support visits together with dedicated care for victims with complex needs, such as problematic drug use.

While the project is led by Newcastle City Council, it will be supported by 6 neighbouring councils, 9 specialist domestic abuse service and refuge providers, local health partnerships, drug misuse charities, housing providers as well as the local police service and the local Police and Crime Commissioner.

By working across councils and the relevant agencies the project aims to identify victims' needs at a much earlier stage, improve their non-crisis work and offer better resettlement accommodation.

Suffolk Satellite Accommodation and Support

This project is a partnership between Suffolk County Council, Ipswich Borough Council and 7 district councils, with support from the Suffolk Police and Crime Commissioner, Phoebe, Anglia Care Trust, and local refuges.

The aim of the project is to provide more accommodation for victims of domestic abuse who do not meet the criteria to be supported in refuge accommodation. This extra housing will be sourced through the local authority, registered social landlords and the private rented sector.

Working closely with existing refuges, the aim is to create a flexible alternative that also offers specialist support to meet the particular needs of victims with complex needs such as mental health issues or those from a BME background. The 3 refuges in Suffolk will also be able to use these extra spaces as 'move on' accommodation when the risk to the victim has reduced or when the victim is ready for greater independence.

Further information

These latest allocations follow the announcement of the £20 million fund to support victims of domestic abuse made on 3 November 2016.

See the [full list of allocations](#) (PDF, 392KB, 13 pages)

The government has already taken steps to end domestic abuse, support victims and make sure offenders are prosecuted. This includes:

- new powers and laws – a new domestic abuse offence to capture coercive and controlling behaviour, the criminalisation of forced marriage, and the introduction of new stalking laws
- the national roll-out of domestic violence protection orders and the

domestic violence disclosure scheme

- £15 million support for a 3-year Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Service Transformation Fund
- £3.5 million provided in 2015 that funded 46 successful bids from around the country, providing 710 extra bed spaces
- £10 million provided in 2014 to 2016, which benefitted 148 areas to support refuges across the country and boost provision for vulnerable victims of domestic violence

[Press release: Six year ban for Watford restaurant boss](#)

Saiful Alam, the sole registered director of Nuha Limited, which traded as the Prince of Bengal, an Indian restaurant and takeaway on Langley Way in Watford, has been disqualified from acting as a company director for six years for causing the company to employ two illegal workers.

Saiful Alam's disqualification follows collaboration between the Insolvency Service and Home Office Immigration Enforcement (HOIE).

On inspecting the premises of Nuha Limited in December 2014, HOIE officials found two illegal workers and imposed a penalty of £30,000.

Payment of the penalty was due by 21 April 2015 but Mr Alam decided to place the company into liquidation before this and so the penalty remained unpaid.

At liquidation in March 2015, the company had a recorded deficiency in excess of £139,000. This included the £30,000 penalty imposed and a further £30,000 in unpaid VAT and other tax.

The disqualification means that Saiful Alam can not be a director of a company whether directly or indirectly, or be involved in the management of a company in any way for the duration of his disqualification unless he has permission from Court.

Commenting on the disqualification, David Brooks, Chief Investigator at the Insolvency Service said:

The Insolvency Service rigorously pursues directors who fail to pay penalties imposed by the government for breaking employment and immigration laws. We have worked closely in this case with our colleagues at the Home Office to achieve this disqualification.

The director sought to gain an unfair advantage over his competitors by employing individuals who did not have the right to work in the UK in breach of his duty as a director.

The public has a right to expect that those who break the law will face the consequences. Running a limited company, means you have statutory protections as well as obligations. If you fail to comply with your obligations the Insolvency Service will investigate and you run the risk of being removed from the business environment.

Saiful Alam, 46, was the sole registered director of Nuha Limited (CRO No. 05022502), which was incorporated in January 2004 and traded as an Indian Restaurant and Takeaway from Langley Way, Watford. His date of birth is 15 August 1970.

Mr Alam has been disqualified for a period of 6 years commencing from 31 January 2017.

One of the main purposes of the Company Directors Disqualification Act is to ensure that proper standards of conduct of company directors are maintained and to raise those standards where appropriate.

A disqualification order has the effect that without specific permission of a court, a person with a disqualification cannot:

- act as a director of a company
- take part, directly or indirectly, in the promotion, formation or management of a company or limited liability partnership
- be a receiver of a company's property

Disqualification undertakings are the administrative equivalent of a disqualification order but do not involve court proceedings.

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

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on:

[Press release: Former Bristol pub landlord disqualified](#)

Owain Charles Evans George, the Director of OMI Partnership Limited trading as The Albion, a pub in Clifton near Bristol, has been disqualified for three and a half years for trading to the detriment of HM Revenue and Customs.

The disqualification, from 28 February 2017, prevents Mr George from directly or indirectly becoming involved in the promotion, formation or management of a company until August 2020. It follows an investigation by the Insolvency Service which found he had unfairly discriminated against HMRC by choosing to pay other trade creditors in advance of the company's VAT owed to HMRC for a

period between January 2014 and 13 February 2015.

OMI Partnership Limited was placed into Liquidation on 13 February 2015 with an estimated deficiency to creditors in excess of £627,825 and outstanding VAT bill totalling £180,567.

Mr George was a director from 9 November 2004 to liquidation.

Robert Clarke, Senior Investigator, said:

Company directors have a duty to ensure businesses meet their legal obligations, including paying taxes. Deliberate neglect of tax affairs is not a victimless action – it deprives public services of vital money and introduces unfair competition in the business market.

The Insolvency Service will investigate and take action against directors who do not comply with their obligations.

Mr George's date of birth is September 1969 and it is believed he is currently of no fixed abode.

OMI Partnership Limited (CR0 No. 05275045) was incorporated on 01 November 2004 and latterly traded as a public house from The Albion, Boyces Avenue, Clifton, Bristol, BS8 4AA.

The Company went into Creditors Voluntary Liquidation on 13 February 2015 with an estimated deficiency of £627,825. A disqualification order has the effect that without specific permission of a court, a person with a disqualification cannot:

- act as a director of a company
- take part, directly or indirectly, in the promotion, formation or management of a company or limited liability partnership
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Media enquiries for this press release – 020 7596 6187

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on:

[Staff shortages see troubled police call centre pay £4k a week in overtime](#)

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- Staff shortages see troubled police call centre pay £4k a week in overtime

17 Feb 2017



Police Scotland have forked out more than £4000 a week in overtime payments for a troubled call-handling centre since it absorbed the work of two other facilities.

The Bilston Glen centre, which was at the centre of the M9 tragedy controversy, took on the work of other facilities in Stirling and Glenrothes in April 2015.

And since then, more than £350,000 has been paid to police staff working overtime to fill gaps in the rota and deal with the increased demand.

The Scottish Conservatives, who obtained the data through Freedom of Information, said it proved the centre has been inadequately resourced from the start, and another example of bad forward-planning by the SNP.

It reveals overtime payments at Bilston Glen reached £289,728 in 2015/16, and £60,852 so far in 2016/17.

John Yuill and Lamara Bell died in 2015 when the car they were travelling in crashed off the M9.

And despite the car's location being reported to the single force's 101 number, it took three days for officers to arrive at the scene.

The delay was blamed on problems with logging calls at Bilston Glen, where staff complained of a lack of resources and insufficient training.

The Scottish Government was also accused of ignoring warnings about resources in call-handling centres for up to 18 months before the tragedy hit.

Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Douglas Ross said:

“Everyone accepts some overtime payments will be necessary in facilities the size of Bilston Glen.

“However, the sheer scale of these points to a major problem with staffing and resources there.

“If the Scottish Government had ensured these facilities were properly staffed to begin with, there wouldn’t be a requirement for additional payments of this magnitude.

“The SNP was warned about this in advance of centralising these units, but as usual ignored them completely.

“Now we see the financial cost of that, not to mention a reduction in performance which has resulted in extremely damaging publicity for Police Scotland.

“This is something the Scottish Government needs to get under control as a matter of urgency.”

To see a copy of the Freedom of Information request, visit:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/17-0045-Data.pdf>

Resources at the Bilston Glen facility came under the spotlight following the M9 tragedy:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2015/09/ruth-snp-ignored-call-centre-warnings-for-18-months/>

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2015/11/report-reveals-police-call-handling-failings/>