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Chancellor cuts stamp duty for first time buyers

Chancellor Philip Hammond has abolished stamp duty for most first time home buyers in England and Wales.

In his autumn budget, he announced that the first £300,000 of the price of a property will be exempt from tax for people entering the housing market for the first time. The change came into effect immediately.

He said the change means 95% of first time buyers will now pay no stamp duty at all, providing them with a saving of up to £5,000, depending on the purchase price.

Mr Hammond also promised that the government would deliver 300,000 new homes a year, and pledged an investment of £44 billion to get more housing projects started.

The government had already announced that it would spend £10 billion to provide 135,000 new homes through the Help to Buy Equity Loan scheme.

More than 130,000 properties have already been sold through the scheme, which helps people buy a new build home with only a 5% deposit.

The new funding means that Help to Buy Equity Loan could help another 135,000 people by 2021. This would bring the total number of households across England that would be supported through the scheme to around 360,000.

Four out of five home purchases using the equity loan scheme have been made by first-time buyers, helping the total number of first-time buyers to increase by 70% between 2010 and 2016.



The equity loan scheme launched in April 2013 and funding has been committed until 2021. It works by the government providing an equity loan of up to 20% which is repaid when the home is sold, or after 25 years, whichever comes first.

No interest or repayments are due during the first 5 years of the loan.

The Help to Buy Equity Loan can be used to purchase a new build property up to the value of £600,000, with a maximum equity loan of £120,000 (20%). In London, applicants can claim an equity loan up to 40% of the purchase price.

Please contact us if you would like advice about the legal aspects of buying or selling a home.

Company wrong to sack bus driver for running red light

A bus driver with an "exemplary record" who was sacked for going through traffic lights when they were on red has won his unfair dismissal claim.

The Employment Tribunal heard that Abdul Jabbar had worked for National Express West Midlands for 37 years and had an unblemished record throughout that time.

He was sacked in October 2015 after a CCTV camera caught him driving through a red light.

He took legal action saying the dismissal was an excessive reaction to one mistake, especially as he had worked for the company for so long without any other issues.



The tribunal found in his favour and said he was entitled to compensation.

Judge Glyn Lloyd said: "The claimant is a bus driver of exemplary record.

"He has worked for the company without any disciplinary taint for some 37 years. He has been free of any accident or driving penalty for some

32 years. What he did was - and we accept it was - a five-second momentary lapse of concentration on his part by a driver who sits in the cab facing the unpredictable environment of busy city roads eight to ten hours each day.

"Considering the totality of the evidence, we find that his summary dismissal in those circumstances was disproportionate."

The amount of compensation will be set at another tribunal unless the two sides can reach an agreement out of court.

Please contact us for more information about the issues raised in this article or any aspect of employment law.