



# BFM Update



The Association for British Furniture Manufacturers

[www.bfm.org.uk/](http://www.bfm.org.uk/)

[www.greatbritishfurniture.co.uk/](http://www.greatbritishfurniture.co.uk/)

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## BFM Links

### Press links for

- Suppliers to furniture trade
- Discounts on testing furniture
- Trade credit insurance
- Business insurance
- BFM logo

## New Members

We would like to welcome the first new BFM members of 2010

[Buoyant Upholstery](#)  
[Mollio Ltd](#)

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## London Fabric 2010 presents - 'The Belgian Fabric Collection'

March 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> 2010 sees the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the 'Belgian Fabric Collection' and we would be delighted to welcome you.

The Naval and Military Club on St. James's Square in London is the venue for an exclusive showcase of upholstery and drapery fabric from the leading mills in Belgium, including;

Acotex  
Annabel  
Beaulieu Fabrics  
Escolys textiles  
Movelta  
Ravel Textiles  
Ter Molst International  
Van Neder  
Muvantex  
Tissat  
Microfibres Europe NV

To register and ensure your pass is waiting for you on arrival, please visit:

[London Fabric](#)

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## Great British Furniture Campaign

This month sees the re-launch of the national advertising campaign. Full colour advertisements will appear in the major national newspaper titles highlighting the qualities of Great British furniture.

## Business Links

### Press links for

- Procurement - Supply2.gov
- Changes to the law affecting business
- Financial support for business

If you would like to join the campaign and be included in these advertisements please contact [adam.mason@bfm.org.uk](mailto:adam.mason@bfm.org.uk)

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## Business opportunity

### Saudi Arabia

A Saudi holding company based in Abha is seeking a joint venture with UK companies specialising in the manufacture of furniture.

Contact details: [adammason@bfm.org.uk](mailto:adammason@bfm.org.uk)

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## Public Sector Procurement Opportunities - reminder

The public sector spends over £220 billion a year on goods and services including low value contracts (that are below the EU Thresholds of around £100,000) for small and medium sized companies. Two of the websites that hold public sector contracts are:

- The Supply2Gov portal - a searchable database that brings together low value contract opportunities across the UK. [supply2.gov.uk](http://supply2.gov.uk)
- Compete4 - allows businesses to apply for contract opportunities linked to the [London Olympics](#)

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## Employment Legislation - what to expect in 2010

### Consultation on the default retirement age

The Government is to consult on the default retirement age, which is currently set at 65 years of age with a view to possible raising it or removing it. The default retirement age came under much scrutiny following a challenge to it by Help the Aged in the Heyday case in 2009. At present employers can continue to use the default retirement age of 65 but you are reminded of the legal obligations to use the statutory retirement procedures (please see [BFM members area](#) of the web site for model letters and guidance)

### Family friendly developments

The main change in this area is paternity leave and pay. Paternity leave and pay are set to be extended in April 2010 – however, will not come into effect until 3 April 2011. Qualifying employees will be able to benefit from up to 26 weeks' additional paternity leave provided the mother returns to work before the end of her ordinary maternity leave period (i.e. the first 26 weeks of leave).

Under this change, qualifying employees will not be entitled to be paid any more than a mother taking her full statutory maternity entitlement – the total statutory payment available to both parents is still for 39 weeks. However, this change would give

greater flexibility between parents to split childcare responsibilities within the child's first year, without losing statutory benefits.

There were plans to extend statutory maternity pay from April 2010 from 9 to 12 months; however, this proposal is still on the shelf.

#### Time off for training or study

The right to request time off is being extended to cover employees who wish to undertake training or study. The right to request time off follows the same pattern in terms of eligibility and process as the right to request flexible working (please see [BFM members area](#) of the web site for guidance).

For example, employees will have to make a written request to ask for time off to undertake external training or study and explain how this training will improve both their personal performance and that of their employer's business. If the employer cannot allow the time off it must have a good business reason(s) for not accepting the request. Again, these follow the list of reasons for rejecting flexible working, for example, the burden of additional costs or the effect on quality of work, performance or customers. A company will also be able to turn down a request if it believes that the training will not improve personal or business performance. The employee may appeal the decision.

The right to request time off does not include a right to be paid any salary or training costs to undertake the training or study. The Government intends to introduce the right to time off to train for employees in organisations with 250 or more employees in April 2010, with the legislation being extended to cover all employees from April 2011 at the earliest.

#### Equality

Perhaps the biggest shake up in legislation next year is the Equality Act which comes into force in October 2010. The proposed Act consolidates all current equality laws into a single piece of legislation. It introduces a number of reforms, including a requirement that employers with at least 250 employees publish information relating to the differences in pay between men and women (expected to come into effect in 2013).

#### Fit notes

In April 2010 the Social Security (Medical Evidence) and Statutory Sick Pay (Medical Evidence) Amendment Regulations 2010 come into force. Under these Regulations, the current "sick note" approach will be replaced with a new "fit note" system. These new "fit notes" will allow doctors to record whether a patient is fit or not to work and also includes a new option to allow a doctor to indicate where someone "may be fit for some work now". An example of such a note is contained in the original consultation document – see - [DWP medical statement-consultation](#)

## Contact BFM

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## during pregnancy

The Advocate General has given his opinion in the case of *Parviainen v Finnair Oyj*, recommending that the European Court of Justice (ECJ) hold that the EU Pregnant Workers Directive does not require an employer to pay a pregnant worker, who is temporarily transferred to a different job to prevent her being exposed to health risks, the average salary that she earned prior to the transfer. The employer is only required to provide her with an adequate allowance, which must be no less than a male or female worker is paid for doing an equivalent job. In most cases the Advocate General's opinion is followed by the ECJ although it is not bound to do so.

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## Fire Safety Requirements for Seating, Upholstery and Beds 2010

SATRA are offering BFM members 15% discount on this seminar. It runs at various times during the year, the next being Thursday 25th March 2010

This seminar provides a full understanding of the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations. It is designed for anyone wishing to understand precisely what the requirements are for domestic sector furniture and the materials that are used in it; these include covers, interliners, foams and other fillings.

If you are interested please go to: [Fire safety event](#)

For the dates of other seminars – see - [Satra event listing](#)

### Contact

[mikedimond@bfm.org.uk](mailto:mikedimond@bfm.org.uk)

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## RBS launches £1bn loan fund for manufacturers

The Royal Bank of Scotland has announced a £1 billion finance fund to support embattled manufacturers hit hard by the recession. RBS, 84 per cent owned by taxpayers, is offering manufacturers loans between £250,000 and £25 million at discounted rates and arrangement fees, with the option to defer capital payments and pay interest only for up to three years. We are told that the fund is designed to provide much-needed finance for manufacturers to take advantage of an expected increase in demand as economic conditions improve.

Manufacturers will be able to access loans on two and three-year fixed rates of 3.4% and 4.3% respectively, with fees of 0.75% - a discount on fees that are often above 1 per cent, according to RBS.

However, while welcome news the fund represents less than 10 % of RBS's existing commitments to the sector and is likely to go

only a small way towards meeting demand for affordable finance among struggling businesses.

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## Business Rates - Revaluation and 2010 transitional arrangements

On 17 November 2009, the Government announced its final decision on the shape of the transitional arrangements for the 2010 business rates revaluation and the provisional multipliers for 2010/11. For details see: [Business rates information letter](#)



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