



Advice UK Conference 2017



Council Tax Imprisonment Campaign



unlawfully jailed

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“A single mother who was sent to prison by magistrates for 81 days because she was unable to pay her council tax bill was unlawfully jailed, the high court has ruled.

The decision by Mr Justice Lewis found that the lower court had failed to assess Melanie Woolcock’s financial means and had no basis for concluding her failure to pay was due to ‘culpable neglect’.

Woolcock of Porthcawl, Wales, had been unemployed after working part-time in a sports shop. She had told her solicitor that she struggled to make household payments and prioritised her rent, gas, electricity and food bills.”

The Guardian – 18 Jan 2017



Objectives



- Work for a change in the law to end imprisonment and threats of imprisonment for council tax debt – England and Wales are the only jurisdictions in western Europe that imprison people for local tax debt.
- Promote the use of local authority and magistrates' court's powers to remit council tax arrears in appropriate circumstances



Objectives



- To lobby local authorities and to help advisers and advice agencies to lobby local authorities to end the threat and use of imprisonment
- To call for improvements in the way the courts deal with committal proceedings -asking Ministry of Justice to review this area including training of Magistrates , Justices' and duty solicitors Society
- To provide materials to help advisers help their clients deal with threats of imprisonment.