

# Press release: Record £15.6 million underpayment identified for workers on the minimum wage

- Record £15.6 million of underpayment identified for more than 200,000 workers
- Employers fined unprecedented £14 million for not meeting legal obligations
- More than 600 employers named in 2017/18 as part of 'naming' rounds
- Ramped up efforts by HMRC to crackdown on underpayment and boost compliance

Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) achieved record enforcement results this year, identifying £15.6million of underpayments.

The number of workers identified as underpaid was double that in 2016/17 and the highest number since the National Minimum Wage came into force.

In every case, the government instructs employers to repay their workers and enforces the return of the missing cash.

The rise in cases follows increased efforts by HMRC to promote compliance and improve employer awareness of the minimum wage.

Business Minister Kelly Tolhurst, said:

We are dedicated to stopping underpayment of the minimum wage. Employers must recognise their responsibilities and pay their workers the money they are entitled to.

The UK's lowest paid workers have had the fastest wage growth in 20 years thanks to the National Living Wage and today's figures serve as a reminder to all employers to check they are getting their workers' pay right.

Over the past year, 56 employers took advantage of a HMRC pilot scheme where employers were encouraged to come forward outside of an investigation. This resulted in nearly £250,000 in arrears being declared for just under 700 workers.

The year also set a new record for penalties issued by the government, with £14 million in fines issued to employers.

More than 600 employers who were found to have underpaid their workers the minimum wage were named in 2017/18. This is the largest number in any single year since the scheme began in 2014.

This year, the social care, retail, commercial warehousing and gig economy sectors have been prioritised by HMRC for enforcement of the minimum wage. This is alongside employment agencies, apprentices and migrant workers. These sectors are where non-compliance with National Minimum Wage is believed to be more widespread.

Penny Ciniewicz, HMRC Director General of Customer Compliance, said:

HMRC is committed to ensuring that workers receive the wages they are legally entitled to, irrespective of their employer's size or business sector, and today's figures highlight our success over the last year.

If anyone thinks they are not receiving at least the minimum wage, they can contact the Acas helpline on 0300 123 1100 in confidence or submit a query online through our complaints form.

Low Pay Commission Chairman Bryan Sanderson said:

All workers are entitled to be paid at least the minimum wage, so it is good to see increased focus on enforcement bearing fruit and securing more arrears for more workers.

Awareness of the minimum wage is vital for workers and employers alike, and strong enforcement is critical to its success.

Funding for minimum wage enforcement has reached record levels, rising to £26.3 million in 2018/19 from £20 million in 2016/17.

For more information about your pay, or if you think you might be being underpaid, get advice and guidance at [www.gov.uk/checkyourpay](http://www.gov.uk/checkyourpay). Workers can also seek advice from workplace experts [Acas](http://Acas).

1. The report can be found here: [National Living Wage and National Minimum Wage: government evidence on compliance and enforcement, 2018](#).

2. Details of the 2017/18 businesses named in the government's naming scheme can be found here:

3. Employers who pay workers less than the minimum wage have to pay back arrears of wages to the worker at current minimum wage rates and face financial penalties of up to 200% of arrears, capped at £20,000 per worker.

4. National Living and Minimum Wage rates:

Date	25 and over	21 to 24	18 to 20	Under 18	Apprentice
April 2018	£7.83	£7.38	£5.90	£4.20	£3.70

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## Press release: £500,000 awarded to organisations helping to tackle causes of the gender pay gap

Five organisations in England have been awarded £489,050 from a new government start-up fund to help people who have taken lengthy career breaks to care for others get back into work, the Minister for Women Victoria Atkins announced today (22 September).

In the UK, nine out of ten potential returners are women. Studies have shown that time out of work and fewer years of full-time work are two of the reasons women struggle to progress at work – contributing towards the gender pay gap.

The five grant recipients from a £1.5 million government start-up fund will support parents and carers back into the workplace through training, refreshing skills and facilitating work placements.

They will also work directly with 79 employers from a range of sectors including law, finance, tech, retail, communications, advertising and marketing.

Minister for Women Victoria Atkins said:

For too long, taking time out of work to care for others has cut short careers and brilliant, talented women are unable to re-enter industries which will not support them to return. This is a huge loss not only to those individuals, but to our economy and businesses all over the country.

We are investing in returners to work – giving them the opportunity to refresh and grow their skills and encouraging employers to change their outdated recruitment processes. By taking action on this issue we can grow the economy and achieve true equality in our workplaces.

McKinsey research found that if women stay in the labour market, work in more productive sectors and work longer hours, there is the potential for £150 billion to be added to the annual GDP in 2025.

This pilot funding will demonstrate to companies that government means business – and inspire them to take their own steps to encourage returners with a vast array of skills back into the jobs market.

The support will help people with caring responsibilities from across the

country to return to work – boosting the economy and helping to tackle the gender pay gap.

Launched on 4 March 2018, the government guaranteed £1.5 million to get people with caring responsibilities back into work. £1,010,950 more funding will be awarded this autumn.

#### **Notes to editors:**

Winning organisations:

#### **Changing Lives: £95,000**

Changing Lives is a national charity that provides specialist support to vulnerable people and families. With our grant they will help 80 returners in the North East who have complex needs such as: homelessness, sexual exploitation, addictions, mental and physical health problems, long-term unemployment and poverty.

#### **Women Returners: £110,000**

Women Returners is a social consultancy supporting returners. They are the established experts in this area, have supported over 50 employers to develop their own returner programmes and developed our Best Practice guidance.

Our grant will allow them to support 100 returners through workshops and training in the legal sector in the North West and Leeds. They will also reform the recruitment and support practices of 12 law firms to enable them to target returners in the future.

#### **St Helens Chamber: £187,000**

St Helen's Chamber is a chamber of commerce that places emphasis in the role the private sector can play in supporting the broader community, particularly in an area of high unemployment.

Our grant will support them to engage 120 returners through career coaching using a pop-up classroom. They will equally engage employers in the local area to identify suitable job opportunities and broker recruitment.

#### **Creative Equals: £65,000**

Creative Equals is an organisation supporting returners in the creative sector. Our grant will allow them to run workshops for 30 returners and support them into roles with 15 employers that will have their recruitment and support practices reformed.

#### **Back2businessship delivered by f1 Recruitment: £32,000**

Back2businessship has a track record of getting returners back to work in the marketing, PR and communications sectors. This includes career changers, parents, carers, returners and flexible workers. With our grant and match-funding from our Employer Company Ambassadors, back2businessship will work

with 25 employers in the Thames Valley, including SMEs, to target job opportunities for 40 returners in the technology, FinTech and financial services sector.

### **Quotes from winners**

Stephen Bell, OBE, Changing Lives CEO, said:

We are delighted to have been successful in securing funding from the Returner's Fund. Here at Changing Lives we are dedicated to supporting those with multiple and complex needs to overcome the barriers they face. This fund will allow us to develop our Employment Services to empower women to move back into employment and fulfil their potential.

Ali Hannan, Creative Equals Founder and CEO, said:

We are so honoured to receive this fund, which will mean we can build more bridges back to work for creative women. It will mean we can scale up our returnship programme to accelerate the number of senior women, as currently only about 14% of Creative Directors in the UK are women, and just 1-2% are BAME women.

Without women curating, editing and director advertising and media, we believe work often fails to resonate with our powerful audience of female consumers (women make 85% of all purchasing decisions, yet 55% of mothers feel advertisers don't understand them).

At the moment, with out-dated portfolios, a biased recruitment sector, and a CV-gap, returning mothers find it difficult to regain their place on the career ladder.

In partnership with progressive agencies and companies in the sector who are committed to inclusion and diversity, we hope this will rebuild careers, close the sector gender pay gap (up to 45% in some advertising agencies) and reshape the future of advertising to reflect the audiences we serve.

Julianne Miles, Women Returners Managing Director, said:

We are delighted that this government funding will enable us to kick-start a much-needed initiative to enable legal professionals to resume their careers at a suitable level after an extended career break.

Women Returners, in partnership with The Law Society, will pilot Law Returners, a cross-company returnship in Manchester and Leeds

in early 2019. The aim is to create a sustainable business-led model to apply across other regions.

Following the rapid growth of returnships in sectors such as financial services, telecoms and construction, we are excited to be extending a concept with proven success into the law sector in Northern England.

Liz Nottingham, founder of Back2businessship and Amanda Fone, co-founder Back2businessship and CEO of Delivery Partner fl recruitment & search ltd, said:

Back2businessship has been committed to helping women get back to their careers in marketing and communications since 2014.

We are thrilled that the funding from the Government Equalities Office (GEO), which will be match-funded by local corporate employers, including Oracle, will help us take our programme for marketing and comms returners to Reading and the M3/M4 corridor with a focus on the technology, FinTech , telecommunications and financial services sectors.

The Back2businessship programme not only re-orientates our returners back to the workplace but helps them find paid contract and permanent work as an outcome. Our hugely popular speed dating event will showcase the calibre and standard of our returners to local businesses.

Tracy Mawson, St Helen's Chamber Deputy Chief Executive, said:

Local businesses tell us that difficulties in recruiting staff is holding back their growth and making them reluctant to create new jobs.

We are delighted that through this project, we will be able to work with returners – in our view a valuable and untapped resource in the local labour market.

We are very excited about the prospect of supporting both businesses and returners to create new job opportunities.

### **Further information**

- A further £1 million of funding will be awarded later in the year.
- The government is committed to building a society where gender has no bearing on a person's pay or opportunity, and is encouraging employers to take targeted actions to close the gaps in their organisations. Greater support for potential returners, combined with increased

provision of flexible working and shared parental leave, are part of a range of measures that can eliminate inequality in the workplace.

- Returners are defined as people with existing work experience who have taken an extended career break for caring or other reasons and who are either economically inactive or now working in lower paid, temporary or part-time work or in home businesses or freelance roles.
  - Returner Programmes are programmes targeted at people returning to work after a long break (typically 2 years or more). There are many forms of returner programme, including return to practice and retraining programmes.
  - For more details, please call the GEO press office on: 0207 023 0600
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## **News story: Government announces definition for cannabis-based products for medicinal use**

The government has announced that cannabis-based products for medicinal use will be available for specialist doctors to prescribe legally and [today sets out which product categories the law-change covers](#).

The Home Secretary, Sajid Javid, committed in July to swift action on behalf of those whose medical conditions could potentially be eased by cannabis-based products and these products will be lawful later in the autumn.

Together with the Health and Social Care Secretary, the Home Secretary has now set out how cannabis-based products for medicinal use will be defined in order to make it lawful for them to be prescribed when specialist doctors believe this is appropriate.

Specialist doctors specialise in one field of medicine such as neurology or paediatrics. In the UK, specialist doctors are listed on the General Medical Council's (GMC) specialist register.

The Home Secretary's decision takes into account recommendations made by the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) and the UK's Chief Medical Adviser.

The government has been clear it has no intention of legalising the recreational use of cannabis. Due to the known harms of smoking and the potential operational impact on misuse and diversion, smoking will remain prohibited.

Patients will not be able to get cannabis-based medicinal products from their general practitioner.

Home Secretary, Sajid Javid said:

After hearing of the cases involving sick children, I pledged to make cannabis products legally available for medicinal use as soon as possible.

Agreeing this definition means specialist doctors will be able to prescribe them to patients most in need later this autumn.

There will be strict controls in place and this is in no way a step towards legalising the recreational use of cannabis.

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Matt Hancock, said:

The Chief Medical Officer's review of the evidence was clear – cannabis-based products can be effective for some conditions. So from autumn specialist doctors will be able to prescribe them when they judge that patients will benefit.

However, these are largely still unlicensed medicines, so it is also important that we build a greater research base on the therapeutic benefit of these products so we can maximise their potential as medicines.

This decision as to which products will be made available is the result of work between the Home Office, ACMD, Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

There are 3 broad requirements for products before they can be prescribed:

- the product is or contains cannabis, cannabis resin, cannabinal or cannabinal derivatives
- the product must be produced for medicinal use in humans
- it must be a product that is regulated as a medicinal product or an ingredient of a medicinal product

Until the autumn, specialist doctors will still be able to apply to the independent expert panel on behalf of patients wishing to access these products.

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**[News story: Government announces](#)**



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## **Press release: Asian hornet: Second Fowey nest destroyed**

The National Bee Unit has located and destroyed a second Asian hornet nest in Fowey, Cornwall.

The Asian hornet is smaller than our native hornet and poses no greater risk to human health than a bee. However, they do pose a risk to honey bees.

Investigation work by the National Bee Unit has continued in the area since the discovery of [a nest in the town earlier this month](#). [That nest was promptly destroyed and removed](#).

Work is now on-going to ensure no further nests are present. Local beekeepers in the surrounding area are supporting this effort, including [in Liskeard where a single sighting of an Asian hornet occurred](#). Members of the public are also encouraged to report any further sightings of Asian hornets.

Nicola Spence, Defra Deputy Director for Plant and Bee Health, said:

While the Asian hornet poses no greater risk to human health than a bee, we recognise the damage they can cause to honey bee colonies.

I am pleased our well-established protocol to contain them is working so effectively in Fowey.

Intensive surveillance by inspectors from the National Bee Unit has taken place around Hull, East Yorkshire, after the finding of a dead Asian hornet in a house. No further Asian hornets have been seen in the area. There is no evidence to suggest the sighting in Hull is linked to the sightings in Cornwall.

Nicola Spence added:

It is reassuring that we have seen no further hornets in Hull however the discovery of a second nest in Fowey emphasises the need for continued vigilance.

During September the number of hornets in a nest can reach a peak and this will increase the chances of members of the public seeing this insect.

I want to encourage people to look out for any Asian hornets and if you think you've spotted one, please report your sighting through the Asian hornet app or online.

If you suspect you have seen an Asian hornet you can report this using the iPhone and Android app 'Asian Hornet Watch' or by emailing [alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk](mailto:alertnonnative@ceh.ac.uk). [Identification guides and more information are available.](#)