

## News story: Government appoints Small Business Commissioner to champion voice of small business

The appointment of the father-of-three from Birmingham marks an important step toward ensuring small businesses have the support they need to thrive and grow – a central tenet of the Government’s Industrial Strategy.

As Commissioner, Mr Uppal will lead an independent office tasked with empowering small businesses. The role will be crucial to supporting small businesses resolve disputes with larger businesses and will help drive a culture change in payment practices.

Mr Uppal and his team will provide general advice and information to small businesses on matters such as resolving disputes, including signposting small businesses to existing support and dispute resolution services, which will be delivered through the commissioner’s website. His priorities will reflect his 20-year experience as a small business owner in the real estate sector, where he saw how even sound businesses could struggle when faced with a culture of late payment by customers.

Mr Uppal said:

“Running your own business can be a very lonely experience and my priority will be ensuring small firms feel supported as well as helping to create an overall impression that business isn’t necessarily cut throat.

“In fact, successful businesses are built on integrity, entrepreneurial spirit and trusting relationships and I want to highlight that Britain can be the best place in the world for new entrepreneurs to establish and grow their own businesses.”

Business Secretary, Greg Clark, said:

“Small businesses are the backbone of our economy, providing jobs and opportunities across the country. I am delighted to announce Paul Uppal as the first Small Business Commissioner. His extensive experience as a small business owner makes him perfectly suited to champion the interests of small business and bring about a change in culture that will create a level playing field for everyone.

“Small businesses are the backbone of our economy, providing jobs and opportunities across the country. Supporting Britain’s 5.5 million small businesses is at the heart of this Government’s Industrial Strategy, and his ambition to tackle unfair payment practices will help support our goal to create an economy that works for all. I wish Paul luck in his new role, and I look forward to working with him in the future.”

The appointment of the SBC builds on the Government’s programme of support

for small business, since 2010 including:

- British Business Bank programmes supporting £3.4 billion of finance to over 59,000 smaller businesses;
- over 50,000 Start-Up Loans worth almost £340 million;
- a network of 39 local growth hubs which make it easier for start-ups and existing businesses to access the support they need; and
- an additional business rates package, announced at the Spring Budget, providing £435m of further support for businesses facing significant bills in England.

The office of the Small Business Commissioner is expected to be operational by the end of 2017.