

News story: Scottish employers to repay employees thousands

The UK Government has published a list of the names of more than 24 employers headquartered in Scotland, found to have underpaid more than 300 Scottish workers by a total of £60,000.

Employers underpaid workers by taking deductions from wages for uniforms, underpaying apprentices and failing to pay travel time.

£1.42m in back pay has been identified for 23,000 workers across the UK, with the employers fined additional £1.97m.

UK-wide companies including Home Bargains and Card Factory (who have significant presences in Scotland) have also been identified as underpaying their employees.

The back pay identified by HMRC affects more UK workers than in any previous list and has generated record fines of £1.95m.

The earliest underpayment dated back to 2011, with the most recent happening this year (2018).

Business Minister Andrew Griffiths said:

Our priority is making sure workers know their rights and are getting the pay they worked hard for. Employers who don't do the right thing face fines as well as being hit with the bill for backpay.

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

UK Government Minister Lord Duncan said:

It beggars belief that some employers think they can get away with underpaying staff and tricking them out of the wage to which they are legally entitled. That's why we are naming and shaming and fining these companies. We won't stop until every employee in Scotland is paid correctly and fairly for their labours.

The top 5 reasons for National Minimum and Living Wage underpayments in this list were:

- Taking deductions from wages for costs such as uniforms

- Underpaying apprentices
- Failing to pay travel time
- Misusing the accommodation offset
- Using the wrong time periods for calculating pay.

Low Pay Commission Chairman Bryan Sanderson said:

It is crucial that employers understand their responsibilities and workers know their rights around the minimum wage. That is why active enforcement and effective communication from UK Government is so important.

It is therefore encouraging to see that HMRC has recovered unpaid wages for the largest number of workers yet in this round of naming and shaming. I'm confident that the UK Government will continue to pursue underpayment of the minimum wage vigorously.

Funding for minimum wage enforcement has more than doubled since 2015, with the UK Government set to spend £26.3m in 2018/19.

The scheme is in its fifth year and calls out employers who have fallen foul of minimum wage laws, so far identifying £10.8m in back pay for around 90,000 workers, with more than 1,900 employers fined a total of £8.4m. HMRC has launched a series of webinars, available on GOV.UK, to help employers check that they are complying with the law.

The UK Government is currently running a campaign to raise awareness of the National Living Wage and National Minimum Wage rates, which increased on 1 April 2018, as well as encouraging workers who have been underpaid to complain to HMRC. The campaign website has had more than 600,000 visits since the campaign began on 1 April.

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.

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

[News story: Liz Truss encourages West Midlands independent businesses to](#)

[embrace export opportunities](#)

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury Liz Truss has praised independent and start-up businesses in West Midlands as the “engine of the Midlands economy” and revealed that first quarter exports from the West Midlands were worth more than £8.8 billion alone, up on last year.

Speaking during a roundtable event with a group of small businesses in Birmingham today (Thursday 5 July), the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Liz Truss, said:

We know that small businesses and entrepreneurs in Birmingham are doing great work creating jobs and powering economic growth for the Midlands.

The employment rate in the West Midlands has increased faster than any other UK region during 2018, and this is in part thanks to successful independent businesses.

To continue this positive trend, it’s important that businesses in this region have as much opportunity as possible to increase their trade and create jobs and I’m here today to learn about how we can help them do this.

The employment rate in the West Midlands is at a record high level with 2.8 million people in work. There are also 92,000 more businesses in the West Midlands now when compared to 2010.

[Press release: EU Expert Panel meets in Cardiff](#)

The UK Government will continue its engagement on EU Exit in Wales, when the Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns convenes the latest meeting of his Expert Panel in Cardiff today (Thursday 5 July).

Alun Cairns will gather representatives from the business, local authorities, agriculture and third sectors in Wales at Caspian Point to discuss their priorities for Brexit and to update them on negotiations following the completion of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act’s passage through Parliament.

The meeting comes in the week that the UK Government introduced its Fisheries Bill which, when combined with our withdrawal from the London Fisheries

Convention, will allow us to control access to UK waters and the allocation of fishing opportunities. This will help provide prosperity for a new generation of fishermen in Wales, as well as preserve and increase the fish stocks in UK waters.

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

It is vital that we have open and honest conversations about what Wales – and the UK as a whole – should look like after our exit from the European Union. This includes discussing the challenges that we may face along the way, and the opportunities that await us at the finish line.

Since the Expert Panel last convened, we have seen the EU Withdrawal Act complete its Parliamentary journey, paving the way to ensuring the UK exits the EU with certainty, continuity and control. We have also hosted the first joint EU Exit meeting with the Welsh Government where representatives of the fishing, farming and business industry gathered to examine issues including how returning powers should be exercised in future.

As we move through the various stages of negotiations, we will go on hearing from these important partners, to ensure that our discussions are informed by the views of every region of the UK, and each sector of our economy.

The Secretary of State for Wales established the Expert Panel to work with him to deliver a smooth and orderly exit from the EU in Wales. The meeting today builds on the constructive conversations they have already had, helping to contribute to the UK's negotiating position.

[Press release: HS2 Ltd to undertake development works for electrification of the Midland Main Line](#)

Following the government's announcement last summer that the preferred HS2 route would include a spur into Sheffield via Chesterfield, the Secretary of State has asked that electrification of this section of the Midland Main Line be included within the next hybrid Bill for HS2.

HS2 Ltd will begin its preparatory works with a series of land surveys to further inform the work programme. A public consultation on the works required for electrification will be undertaken at a later date, prior to any

hybrid Bill being brought to Parliament.

An HS2 spokesperson said:

The benefits that HS2 will deliver are significant and should not be underestimated. The new railway will play a crucial role in rebalancing Britain's economy; driving business growth, creating jobs and securing investment right across the country.

Ensuring the Midland Main Line is electrified between Clay Cross and Sheffield Midland Station will enable Chesterfield and the wider Sheffield City Region to benefit from direct services on the new high speed trains.

Press and media enquiries

For enquiries during office working hours, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm
020 7944 6149

For enquiries outside of these hours and at the weekend
020 7944 0550

The press and media enquiries line is for accredited journalists only

[News story: PHE statement on incident in Amesbury](#)

Last night (3 July 2018) Wiltshire Police and partners declared a major incident in connection with 2 people who fell ill in Amesbury.

Public Health England is working closely with both national government and local services to respond to this incident.

Dr Mike Wade, Deputy Director of Health Protection in the South-West, said:

Our current advice, based on the number of casualties affected, is that it is not believed that there is a significant health risk to the wider public. We will keep this assessment under constant review as further information becomes known.