

How the government is supporting workers

News story

What the government has done to protect and enhance workers' rights.



The UK has one of the best workers' rights records in the world. As a result of government action, there are now more employees on the payroll than ever before, as we continue to support workers and build a high skilled, high productivity, high wage economy.

The government has protected and enhanced workers' rights by:

1. Making sure 2.5 million people received a pay rise in April by [raising the minimum and living wage](#). The largest ever cash increase to the National Living Wage will put over £1000 a year into a full-time workers' pay packet, helping to ease cost of living pressures. We're helping younger people too, by lifting the minimum wages for under-23s and apprentices.
2. Leading the world with one of the highest minimum wages in the world – more generous than those in similar economies such as France, Germany and Japan.
3. Holding UK businesses to account, ensuring employees are getting what they are owed. In December we [named and shamed 208 employers who had failed to pay the minimum wage](#) – taking the total number of employers named since 2014 to around 2,500. We made sure these companies paid back their employees and paid the price with hefty fines for law breakers. We have also quadrupled the maximum fine for employers who treat their workers badly.
4. Giving the lowest paid in society more control over when and where they work. The government just this week announced it will extend the ban on using exclusivity clauses to contracts where a worker's guaranteed weekly income is below the Lower Earnings Limit, which is currently £123 a week. This ensures an estimated 1.5 million people have the option to pick up extra work if they want to, further increasing flexibility.
5. Tackling appalling business practices, such as P&O Ferries firing their

employees without consultation. Reporting them to the insolvency service and taking an active role in ensuring they treat their workers fairly, we also recently committed to producing a [statutory code on fire and rehire practices](#) to strengthen the rights of all employees. This will clamp down on controversial tactics used by employers who fail to engage in meaningful consultations with employees before making changes to their contracts.

6. [Closing a loophole which sees agency workers employed on cheaper rates](#) than permanent workers.
7. Recognising the importance of flexible working arrangements by announcing a wide-ranging package of measures to help give employees more flexible working options in the future, including seeking views on [making flexible working the default](#) unless employers have good reason not to.
8. Offering generous leave entitlements, continuing with our aim to make the UK the best place in the world to live and work. Workers get over 5 weeks of annual leave and a year of maternity leave, while the EU minimum for maternity leave is just 14 weeks.
9. As part of this, we also brought into force a world first, giving parents a new legal right to 2 week's [paid bereavement leave](#) for those who suffer the devastating loss of a child, irrespective of how long they have worked for their employer.
10. Giving all workers the [right to receive a statement of their rights from day one](#).
11. Supporting workers throughout the pandemic, taking steps to protect the earnings of workers through furlough, including a new law to make sure furloughed employees who were made redundant received full redundancy payments.
12. And of course, all this action to support workers' rights has come alongside the government's unprecedented £9bn package to support families with the cost of living, including a £150 council tax rebate, and a £200 energy bill discount to cut energy bills for the vast majority of households.

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[Minister for Asia visits South Korea to deliver closer bilateral ties](#)

Minister of State for Asia, Amanda Milling, visited South Korea this week (8-10 May) to attend the inauguration of President Yoon Suk-Yeol and promote collaboration on bilateral and global issues.

Prior to the inauguration ceremony, the Minister met President Yoon to discuss a range of bilateral initiatives aimed at strengthening cooperation

between our two countries. They also exchanged views on regional security and the importance of the international community acting together to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

President Yoon was presented with a letter of congratulations from UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

Minister for Asia, Amanda Milling, said:

South Korea is a key security partner and trusted friend in the region, as well as a very important trading partner for the UK.

Our countries have a strong relationship based on a shared understanding of the world's major threats and how best to deal with them, including regional security and Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine.

It was a pleasure to represent the UK at the inauguration of President Yoon Suk-Yeol and I look forward to enhancing and elevating the bilateral relationship, building on our shared values and mutual interests, as part of the UK's far-reaching work in the Indo-Pacific.

The Minister also met Foreign Minister-designate Park Jin and senior South Korean Parliamentarians from the Foreign Affairs Committee. This follows another year in which bilateral relations have flourished. Last year South Korea was a guest nation at the UK's G7 Summit and outgoing President Moon attended the COP26 Summit in Glasgow.

Korea also welcomed the visit of the UK's Carrier Strike Group, headed by the aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth, in a clear demonstration of commitment to enhanced security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region.

Whilst in Seoul, the Minister also took time to visit the Korean War Museum, laying a wreath in honour of soldiers of all allied countries who gave their lives during the Korean War – including 1,106 of the more than 80,000 British service personnel who fought to defend Korea against Communist aggression. She also met with a group of young defectors from North Korea (DPRK), reiterating the UK's position on universal human rights and ongoing support for the North Korean defector community through the British Embassy in Seoul.

[Alternative waste route found for](#)

Dounreay's bulk metal items

Dounreay in partnership with Nuclear Waste Services and its contractor Cyclife first trialled an alternative treatment option for the site's metallic waste in 2019, when 66 tonnes of redundant metal equipment were sent to Cyclife's specialist facility for recycling.

Following this successful trial, a flask adaptor plug weighing 10 tonnes recently left site for the recycling facility.

[Bulk waste transport from Dounreay video](#)

DSRL Assistant Project Manager Catherine Strathdee said:

Now that this route is available to us, we will use it regularly to recycle large items that are too large to fit inside standard waste containers.

Cyclife Managing Director Joe Robinson said:

Cyclife is delighted to have supported DSRL and Nuclear Waste Services over the last 3 years to enable the DSRL mission. The project team has developed a strong integrated and collaborative working environment, which has contributed to the success of the project.

Dounreay is also trialling other waste routes that are available when recycling is not feasible. This includes disposal of a redundant supercompactor unit, removed from a waste facility in 2011, which has now been successfully transported offsite for disposal in a suitable licensed landfill site in England.

This is a new offsite disposal option that will enable Dounreay to dispose of items with low specific activity that are not suitable for recycling due to the presence of other hazardous substances or disposal within the low-level waste vaults. To make this happen, Dounreay has collaborated with Nuclear Waste Services, Cyclife UK Ltd, a strategic waste partner and Augean, the landfill owner.

These new waste routes will minimise the number of low-level waste vaults that the site will need as it is decommissioned.

DSRL Head of Waste Operations, Alistair Ross, said:

Off-site diversion and disposal options for our waste are key to the successful decommissioning of the Dounreay site. These ensure that the waste is disposed of or recycled through the most

appropriate route that provides safe, compliant disposition coupled with value for money and offers decommissioning projects alternatives to disposal to the low-level waste vaults or interim storage.

Minister Mordaunt speech to Belgian Trade Delegation led by HRH Princess Astrid

It's an honour to welcome Her Royal Highness Princess Astrid, Her Excellency the Minister, and the Belgian delegation here to London.

I would like to thank the Federation of Enterprises in Belgium and the CBI for all the good work you are doing and for inviting me today.

Our nations are longstanding allies with a partnership built upon our shared values of free trade, security, and democracy.

We are both founding members of NATO, and now more than ever we must be united in our commitment to European security.

But security is more than just defence, ensuring our economic stability is vital.

The ability for our nations to capitalise and seize new opportunities is one which cannot be taken for granted. We must work together to protect our businesses, consumers, and sectors.

I appreciate that for many businesses the last few years have caused difficulty and uncertainty. I want to reassure you that the UK is as open as ever and committed to supporting your firms.

While I appreciate Brexit was not to everyone's liking, it does highlight certain qualities that are helpful to business. Knowing that the government does what the people tell it to do. Whatever you think of Brexit, it helped to reinforce the belief that governments are the servants of the people. Never the other way around.

So change has come to our trading relationships. It has happened and we are adjusting. Change offers unprecedented opportunities for fresh thinking in business. Change is the fuel that entrepreneurial companies need.

Whilst the UK has set a new path, we're committed to close trading ties with Belgium and the rest of Europe. We remain strong friends and allies. After the Ukrainian war, now more than ever, we respect each other's commitment to

democracy.

A relationship based on zero tariffs and zero quotas under the Trade and Cooperation Agreement.

A relationship we are building on through meaningful engagement to make sure the deal delivers on its promise of free, fair, and plentiful trade.

The £900 million that Belgian firms invested in the UK over the past year alone, is testament to the work we have already done.

However, we must not be complacent.

The UK is committed to the continued modernisation of its relationship with the EU, ensuring we maximise our collective potential – as evidenced through the UK's £180 million investment to build a Single Trade Window; streamlining traders' interactions with border agencies.

A second opportunity I would like to speak to is shared priorities...

We have never been closer in our common purpose.

Both our nations are rising to the existential challenge of our age – climate change in the long-term, and rising energy costs in the short-term. I believe these two challenges are two sides of the same coin. Reducing carbon and reducing costs walk hand in hand. When we re-use, re-cycle and reduce we save money as well as protect our environment.

Of course, this will take close cooperation. But I believe we, in partnership, can be successful.

Belgium and the UK are world leaders in this regard with you committing to increasing offshore wind generation to 8 Gigawatts by 2030 and the UK setting an ambitious target to quadruple our solar and wind power generation over the next decade.

I also welcome the current joint ventures in wind technology between our countries and recognise there are many further opportunities for collaboration including in hydrogen, carbon capture and electric cars.

But to guarantee success, our governments must continue to provide the connections and infrastructure that enables world-class talent to deliver.

The MoU on energy cooperation signed earlier this year is working towards exactly that.

The final point I want to highlight is the UK's role as a gateway to the world.

Belgium can and should see the UK as a means to access global opportunities – from the US to the Indo-Pacific.

By operating in the UK, Belgian businesses will be able to benefit from the

network of Free Trade Agreements we are now signing outside of the EU.

The UK has already agreed deals with Australia and New Zealand. One of the Bills announced in the Queens speech today will bring those deals into effect.

We are on track to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership by the end of year. And I'm driving forward trade talks between the UK and 20 individual US states, slashing bureaucracy, and strengthening our ties with the world's largest economy.

All these agreements will benefit Belgian businesses who invest in, and trade with, the UK.

As economic competition intensifies worldwide, we must clear the path to trade between our nations. We must remove unnecessary obstacles to growth and ensure we provide our businesses with the necessary tools to succeed.

Because it is businesses, not governments, that deliver prosperity.

It is businesses, not governments, that create sustainable jobs and drive innovation.

And it is businesses, not governments, that forge the trade and investment ties which bring nations together.

So, let's set more innovative British and Belgian firms free to trade and invest between our markets.

Change can be the opportunity they've been waiting for.

Thank you.

[Organised crime group members jailed](#)

Following an extensive collaborative investigation between the Ministry of Defence Police (MDP), Merseyside Police and Police Scotland, six men have been sentenced to a total of 68 years and 8 months in prison.

Two former Royal Marines, Stuart Bryant and Grant Broadfoot, were group members and used their access to MOD stores and vehicles to steal ammunition and transport illicit drugs, with Broadfoot's father also involved in supply of the drugs.

At the High Court in Glasgow today, Broadfoot, 29, was jailed for 5 years 3 months, Bryant, 31, for 3 years 9 months, and Ian Broadfoot, 62, received a Community Payback Order for 225 hours unpaid work, to be completed within 12 months, and a supervision requirement for 27 months.

In June 2020, as serving Royal Marines at the time, Broadfoot and Bryant, along with Broadfoot's father, were arrested by Police Scotland, as they transferred items from a military fleet vehicle to Ian Broadfoot's van in a car park in Glasgow. The vehicles were searched and almost £50,000 in cash and 30kg of cannabis, with an estimated street value of £300,000, were recovered.

Later evidence identified that Broadfoot had stolen ammunition, seeking to supply this to organised criminals, and Broadfoot's father was concerned in the supply of cannabis.

Further investigation by MDP Crime Command revealed the former Royal Marines' drug supplier to be Jacob Bullen, who was subsequently arrested by MDP Detectives while in possession of £75,000 worth of cocaine. Evidence proved that he had been involved in the supply of at least 5kg of cocaine, 5kg of heroin and 33kg of cannabis, including the 30kg of cannabis possessed by Broadfoot and Bryant, over a considerable length of time.

MDP Crime Command Detectives went on to discover evidence provided to Merseyside Police, and collaborative working led to the arrest of Jonathan McKeown, 36, who along with Bullen, Ashley Moorcroft, 33, and Craig Murray, 41, was selling Class A and B controlled drugs on an industrial scale.

On Tuesday 19 April, at Liverpool Crown Court, McKeown pleaded guilty to supplying 60kg of cocaine and heroin, and 56kg of amphetamine and cannabis. Moorcroft and Murray also pleaded guilty to similar offences. McKeown was sentenced to 20 years imprisonment, Moorcroft to 19 years and 6 months and Murray to 8 years and 6 months. Earlier in the month, on 1 April, Bullen had also pleaded guilty to the overwhelming evidence on the extent of his involvement in the supply of drugs, and [his original sentence of 6 years and 8 months](#) was increased to 11 years and 8 months.

Kilo of cocaine, images from Merseyside offenders: Crown Copyright.

Intelligence about the Organised Crime Group members' activity was obtained as part of Operation Venetic – a significant international operation, targeting criminals who used encrypted mobile devices to try and evade detection. Their sentences have been welcomed by police and prosecutors.

Raffaele D'Orsi, MDP Head of Investigations and Intelligence said:

The sentencing of each of these criminals is testament to the exceptional, complicated and meticulous investigation undertaken by MDP Crime Command Detectives, in collaboration with Merseyside Police and Police Scotland, whilst working in partnership with the Crown Office Procurator Fiscal and Crown Prosecution Service colleagues. Delivering prison sentences totalling 68 years and 8 months, demonstrates how serious the courts viewed this criminality and sends a clear deterrent message.

This organised criminality posed a significant risk to the safety of our communities, and I am very proud of all the dedicated officers and staff involved.

The Ministry of Defence Police will continue to identify anyone who is a threat to the MOD's people, assets or estates and we will reach out into the communities to mitigate such threats and bring all involved to justice, whether they are Defence employees or not and wherever they may be.