

# Government must now act to stop the growing pressure on low and middle income families – Abrahams

**Debbie Abrahams MP, Labour's Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary**, commenting on today's Labour Market Statistics, said:

"We welcome the overall increase in employment, but are concerned that wide regional differences in the numbers of people in work remain.

"It is also worrying to see that rising living costs are quickly catching up with wage growth. If this trend continues, the Government's abysmal record on living standards will get even worse.

"With wages set to be lower in 2021 than before the Tories came to power, they must now act to stop the growing pressure on low and middle income families.

"That's why Labour is urging the Government to reverse cuts to in-work support that could see some working families worse off by £2,600 a year."

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## News story: Making sure procurement practice is best practice

From:

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The Mystery Shopper service is evolving to ensure concerns raised by suppliers about public sector procurements are properly resolved.

The Crown Commercial Service Mystery Shopper team is now actively following up to check how contracting authorities have implemented the recommendations.

This means the investigation doesn't end when bodies say they will make changes – the Mystery Shopper team is following up to make sure that changes were made that support public procurement in being open to all businesses, including SMEs.

Suppliers already know they can contact the Crown Commercial Service's Mystery Shopper team to raise issues about a procurement, and the team then works with the supplier and the authority to broker a result.

In many cases, recommendations are agreed with the bodies to make changes to future procurements, and details of these cases are then published.

Now, the results of the follow-up investigations will be published every month alongside the usual Mystery Shopper publication.

For more information about CCS's Mystery Shopper service, visit [the Mystery Shopper webpages](#)

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## **BCC: UK labour market in good health**

Commenting on the labour market statistics for February 2017, released today by the Office for National Statistics, Suren Thiru, Head of Economics at the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC), said:

“Overall, with employment levels rising and unemployment still falling, the latest figures confirm that the UK jobs market is in good health.

“It remains likely that even if economic conditions become more subdued over the near-term, the underlying resilience of the UK's jobs market will help ensure that we don't see a marked deterioration in recruitment. Our own survey data suggests that hiring expectations have improved, although firms continue to report considerable difficulties in recruiting the right staff.

“With pay growth slowing slightly, the differential between price increases and wage growth continues to close. If this trend persists earnings in real terms could be squeezed, stifling consumer spending, which is an important determinant of UK growth.

“A key priority for the upcoming Budget must be to support firms looking to recruit and grow their business. This includes tackling the high up-front taxes and costs of doing business in the UK, which weigh heavily on companies regardless of their stage in the economic cycle, performance or ability to pay.”

**Ends**

**Notes to editors:**

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) sits at the heart of a powerful network of 52 Accredited Chambers of Commerce across the UK, representing thousands of businesses of all sizes and within all sectors. Our Global Business Network connects exporters with nearly 40 markets around the world. For more information, visit: [www.britishchambers.org.uk](http://www.britishchambers.org.uk)

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## **Official Statistics: Forestry Commission England Headline Performance Indicators at 31 December 2016**

The document will present Forestry Commission England's six headline indicators: number of high priority forest pests in the UK Plant Health Risk Register, percentage of known tree felling that is carried out with Forestry Commission approval, percentage of woodland in active management, area of woodland, cost of managing the Public Forest Estate and number of private sector businesses operating on the Public Forest Estate.

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## **PSLV-C37 successfully launches 104 satellites in a single flight**

In its thirty ninth flight (PSLV-C37), ISRO's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle successfully launched the 714 kg Cartosat-2