

# The Social Mobility Commission joins Cabinet Office

News story

The SMC is now sponsored by the Minister for Women and Equalities, as part of the Equality Hub, to advise on the importance of social mobility in the UK.



On 1 April 2021 the Social Mobility Commission moved to the Cabinet Office. Previously sponsored by the Department for Education, the Social Mobility Commission is an independent statutory body that exists to create a United Kingdom where the circumstances of birth do not determine outcomes in life.

The move ensures that the Social Mobility Commission is at the heart of the government and enables the Commission to have increased influence and leverage in addressing social and regional inequality.

The Social Mobility Commission is now sponsored by the Minister for Women and Equalities as part of the Equality Hub, which already includes the Government Equalities Office, the Race Disparity Unit and the Disability Unit, to drive meaningful progress on equalities in the UK.

The Commission is led by Sandra Wallace and Steven Cooper who were appointed as interim chairs of the Social Mobility Commission on a job share basis in July 2020. Their interim appointment has been recently extended for a period of up to six months. The appointment will ensure accountability and strong leadership are maintained until the conclusion of an open recruitment process to appoint a permanent chair.

## **More key information about the Social Mobility Commission's move:**

- The Minister for Women and Equalities Liz Truss announced in December that the Social Mobility Commission would move to the Cabinet Office.
- The Commission was established by the Child Poverty Act 2010. The Commission was previously referred to as the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission and is operated in accordance with the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016.

- Sandra Wallace is Managing Partner UK and Joint Managing Director Europe at DLA Piper. She is one of the most senior female lawyers in the UK and has previously headed DLA Piper's UK Employment group. The Powerlist 2020 recognised Sandra as one of the top 100 most influential black people in Britain.
- Steven Cooper is the incoming CEO of Aldermore Bank starting in May 2021, after serving as CEO of private bank C. Hoare & Co. Steven previously served as a senior executive at Barclays, and led on community investment and diversity programmes for the UK. Steven is also Chair of Experian UK, and serves as a non-executive director of recruitment firm Robert Walters plc, as well as a private equity backed payments business.

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## Millions get pay rise from today as National Living Wage and National Minimum Wage increase comes into effect

- Around 2 million of the UK's lowest-paid workers will benefit from an increase in National Living Wage and National Minimum Wage
- National Living Wage will rise 2.2% to £8.91, and be given to 23 and 24-year-olds for the first time
- Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng urges workers to check their pay packet to ensure they get what they are entitled to

Millions of workers in all parts of the UK will receive a pay increase from today (April 1), as the National Living Wage and National Minimum Wage uplift comes into effect.

The rate rises include a 2.2% increase in the National Living Wage to £8.91, the equivalent of more than £345 extra per year for someone working full-time.

And for the first time since it came into effect in 2016 more younger people will be eligible for the National Living Wage, as the age threshold will be lowered from 25 to 23 years old.

The rise means someone working full time on the National Living Wage from April 2021 will be taking home £5,400 more annually than they were in 2010.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

The National Minimum and Living Wages have increased every year since they were introduced, supporting the lowest paid, and despite the challenges we've faced recently, this year will be no different.

That's why we're providing a well-earned pay rise to 2 million people, which will be a welcome boost to families right across the UK.

To make sure the next generation isn't left behind, everyone over 23 years old will also now be eligible.

Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng said:

In this toughest of years, we're protecting workers by putting more money in the pockets of the UK's lowest paid.

To support our next generation of workers, we've also lowered the age threshold for the Living Wage to 23 – ensuring even more people have the security of a decent wage.

This increase will help millions of families in every corner of the country, while supporting businesses as we prepare to safely reopen our economy and build back better from the pandemic.

I'd urge all workers to check their pay packet to ensure they're getting what they are entitled to, and remind employers of their duty to pay the correct wage.

Chancellor Rishi Sunak said:

We know that the past year has been very difficult for businesses and families across the country. This pay rise will help support employees as we steadily reopen the economy and get more people back to work.

At the same time, our Plan for Jobs is helping support businesses to recover and create more jobs, with measures such as VAT cuts, business rates relief, and cash grants for the most affected sectors.

From today, those over the age of 23 are eligible for the National Living Wage. The National Minimum Wage applies to those from school leaving age to 22. The uplift will particularly benefit workers in sectors such as retail, hospitality and cleaning and maintenance.

In full, the increases from April 1 2021 are:

- National Living Wage (23+) has increased 2.2%, from £8.72 to £8.91

- National Minimum Wage (21-22) has increased 2%, from £8.20 to £8.36
- National Minimum Wage (18-20) has increased 1.7% from £6.45 to £6.56
- National Minimum Wage (under 18) has increased 1.5% from £4.55 to £4.62
- Apprentice Rate has increased 3.6% from £4.15 to £4.30

The National Living Wage and National Minimum Wage have increased every year since their introduction – and, in this extraordinary year, there is no exception. The government is committed to providing both workers and businesses with certainty in this difficult time.

The new rates – announced at the Chancellor’s Spending Review 2020 – were recommended by the independent body the Low Pay Commission, following extensive consultation. The government is committed to the target of the National Living Wage reaching two-thirds of median earnings by 2024, and this increase allows progress to continue to be made towards it.

The figures were recommended with the aim to provide a rise in pay for millions of families across the UK, while ensuring businesses can thrive as the country continues to recover from COVID-19.

Throughout the pandemic the government’s priority has always been to protect jobs and incomes. And, indeed, many low paid workers have supported the country through these challenging times.

Over the past year, the UK government has helped millions of people to continue to provide for their families as part of its Plan for Jobs to protect, support and create employment.

An unprecedented £352 billion support package has helped to safeguard jobs, businesses and public services in every region and nation of the UK.

Our support package includes protecting 11.2 million jobs through the furlough scheme, £18.9 billion to support 2.7 million self-employed workers to date, and billions of pounds in tax deferrals and grants for businesses.

The £2 billion Kickstart scheme has created over 120,000 opportunities for young people and we’re offering employers £3,000 for every new apprentice they hire.

Last month’s Budget introduced new measures to cut down on the cost of living by freezing fuel duty for the eleventh consecutive year – saving an average car driver £12.84 per tank and a cumulative £1,600, and freezing all alcohol duties, saving drinkers £1.7 billion.

Through the pandemic, we’ve offered support targeted specifically to parents, like keeping nurseries open and support bubbles so grandparents and other carers can provide childcare provision. Working parents are able to be furloughed if they need to look after their children, and we have ensured women will not lose Statutory Maternity Pay if their roles have been furloughed.

In October we announced a new easement for Tax-Free Childcare which means working parents in a government coronavirus job support scheme who would

normally be eligible for Tax Free Childcare or 30 hours free childcare but whose incomes are below the minimum threshold for these schemes due to the pandemic, can retain their eligibility.

And we've ended the Tampon Tax meaning women will save, on average, £0.07 on a pack of 20 tampons and £0.05 on a pack of 12 pads, which has been welcomed by the Fawcett Society as well as others.

If someone is concerned that they are not being paid the correct wage, they should speak with their employer. If the problem is not resolved, they can contact Acas (the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) on 0300 123 1100, or complain to HMRC.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) is working with partners to run a campaign to encourage eligible workers to visit [the Check Your Pay site](#) where they can check their pay and find out what they can do if they believe they are underpaid. The campaign aims to reach workers through social media, digital and other channels.

The 23-24 age category for the National Minimum Wage has been abolished, following the lowering of the age of the eligibility for the National Living Wage to 23 years old.

This table shows the number of workers projected for April 2021 covered by NLW and NMW rates, by region. Estimates are based on 2020 data from Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE). The survey covers data for April of each year: ASHE 2021 data will not be released until the autumn.

### **Coverage of all NLW and NMW rates: projected number of workers paid at or below in April 2021**

<b>Region</b>	<b>Projected no. of workers paid at or below NLW rates</b>	<b>Projected no. of workers paid at or below NMW rates</b>
North East	90,000	13,000
North West	239,000	27,000
Yorkshire & Humber	196,000	27,000
East Midlands	163,000	25,000
West Midlands	197,000	24,000
South West	186,000	30,000
East	176,000	24,000
London	180,000	18,000
South East	245,000	38,000
Wales	101,000	12,000
Scotland	130,000	17,000
Northern Ireland	86,000	15,000
Total	1,991,000	269,000

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# Addressing the international debt architecture as part of our recovery

I want to thank Prime Minister Trudeau, Prime Minister Holness and the Secretary General for convening us today.

This crisis calls for sustained and responsive global leadership.

As we speak, the pandemic continues to have a severe impact on economic growth, especially in the most vulnerable countries, with economic scarring a real risk. The World Bank estimates that, for the first time in 20 years, global poverty is set for a significant increase.

COVAX aims to bring the acute phase of the pandemic to an end in even the poorest regions of the world. But real recovery will take much, much longer.

What we need are green, inclusive and resilient recoveries. While financing needs remain high, and fiscal space is more squeezed than ever, we risk missing that chance.

This is why we have and will continue to take decisive action.

The UK has doubled our existing commitment to the IMF's Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust with a new £2.2bn loan.

We contributed £150m to the IMF's Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust.

We supported the significant escalation of financial support to the poorest countries by the IMF and World Bank, with nearly \$40 billion disbursed.

The scale of this issue is such, that it needs each and every one of us to join together in collective action.

The G20 debt service suspension initiative has already suspended nearly \$6 billion dollars in debt service repayments.

We have also agreed a Common Framework that brings together the major bilateral creditors to deliver coordinated debt treatments and seek comparable treatment from the private sector.

There is more we can do, as partners.

First, we must make the Common Framework a success. That means ensuring all official and private creditors participate on comparable terms.

Second, we must improve transparency standards. Transparency can improve sovereign ratings, help citizens hold their governments to account for borrowing undertaken on their behalf and pave the way for more sustainable financing decisions.

Finally, under the UK's G7 Presidency, G7 Finance Ministers have agreed that a new and sizeable allocation of Special Drawing Rights at the IMF could provide further financial support for low-income countries and pave the way to a truly global recovery.

We need to work quickly to deliver these solutions for the countries and people that need it most.

The UK will use our G7 and COP26 presidencies to lead the charge in 2021.

In the G7 we will promote continued action on debt and financial support for low income countries, and for the most climate-vulnerable, to boost their resilience.

It is important that our actions are informed by those on the front line of climate impacts. So, in just two days' time, we host a Climate and Development Ministerial as part of our COP26 presidency. We are creating a space for dialogue between donor and recipient countries as well as international institutions and development banks.

Fiscal space and debt sustainability is a key theme. We will be encouraging Ministers to build on today's meeting and bring forward practical solutions to address these challenges.

The need to accelerate our progress on the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement is critical.

In a time of unprecedented challenge, we must raise an unprecedented response.

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## **Sainsbury's becomes final retailer to sign up to GCA forensic auditing commitment**

News story

The final retailer has now agreed to sign up to the GCA's voluntary commitment on forensic auditing.



Sainsbury's will adhere to the commitment limiting the auditing of suppliers' trading for missed claims to no more than the current and previous two financial years from 6 March 2022.

The commitment is reciprocal and suppliers must agree to limit their own audit activity in return. Twelve of the thirteen retailers regulated by the GCA are currently signatories to the commitment.

It was first introduced in 2014 after the GCA survey identified forensic auditing as the issue of most concern to suppliers. Since then, the number of suppliers reporting having experienced the issue has fallen although some concerns remain about how audits are conducted and finalised.

GCA Mark White said: "In the early days of the GCA, the issue of forensic auditing was a major concern for suppliers who were being asked for large sums of money with the burden of proof falling on them to show that any discrepancies were not valid claims. For many suppliers having to piece together the audit trail after long periods of time was a massive challenge.

"Legally, retailers and suppliers can make claims against one another going back up to six years. However, the voluntary commitment has played an important role in building more constructive relationships in the groceries sector. I am delighted that Sainsbury's has seen the value of signing up to the agreement.

"I will continue to monitor what suppliers report of their experiences."

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## **Surge testing to be deployed in targeted areas in Harrow**

Press release



The government is taking swift and decisive action by deploying extra testing to Harrow to control and suppress any possible new cases of the COVID-19 variant first identified in South Africa.



Working in partnership with the local authority, additional testing and genomic sequencing is being deployed in targeted areas within South Harrow, where 1 case of the COVID-19 variant first identified in South Africa has been found.

Testing will start on 1 April.

Enhanced contact tracing is used for individuals testing positive with a 'variant of concern'. This is where contact tracers look back over an extended period in order to determine the route of transmission. Positive cases will be sequenced for genomic data to help increase our understanding of COVID-19 variants and their spread within these areas.

Individuals working within this targeted area are strongly encouraged to take a COVID-19 test when offered, whether they are showing symptoms or not.

People with symptoms should [book a free test online](#) or by phone so they can get tested at a testing site or have a testing kit sent to them at home. Those without symptoms should [visit the local authority website for more information](#).

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