



National Minimum Wage rise to help a million low-paid workers

It is hard to believe it's been ten years since the government introduced the national minimum wage here in the UK and it's easy to forget just how groundbreaking its introduction was.

Today, the national minimum wage is a fundamental feature of the UK's employment landscape and its one that this government has worked hard to protect.

From October, the minimum wage for workers over 22 years old will increase from £5.73 an hour to £5.80 and from 4.77 to £4.83 for 18 to 21 year olds. I appreciate this is less than some workers had hoped and more than some businesses had wanted.

But we have worked hard to find a balance that takes into account the worsening economic conditions, while protecting the UK's low-paid and most vulnerable workers.

One only has to look back at the salary of many employees before the minimum wage was introduced to measure its success. For the first time, employees were provided a national minimum floor, guaranteeing an acceptable income for every household. And ten years on,

950,000 to 1 million workers still stand to benefit from the uprating of the minimum wage.

That is why we have intensified our efforts in cracking down on those who look to exploit the system and from October, using tips to make up workers' national minimum wage will be outlawed.

People leave tips in good faith, as a mark of excellent service, and they have the right to know those tips are being used for the purpose they were given and not to make up the minimum wage.

The national minimum wage, as I see it, is an essential part of the UK's employment framework. It is a standard that protects the rights of this country's world respected workforce, without who the UK will not succeed in the upturn.

FAIR TIPS FOR WORKERS IN Corby and East Northamptonshire

Government end tips counting towards payment of the National Minimum Wage

The government will change the current minimum wage rules on tipping so that in the future, tips will be added to the Minimum Wage. This practice will be outlawed from October this year.

This will give thousands of workers fair wages and will ensure a fair and level playing field for employers and boost consumer confidence in the use of tips.

The government will also be working towards greater transparency and clarity for consumers through a new industry code of best practice.

When people in Corby and East Northamptonshire are struggling are facing tough times it is more important than ever to have the National Minimum Wage.

This is a matter of fairness and common sense. When leave a tip after a meal or when you have a haircut you expect it to go to the staff on top of their pay. Not to be put through the payroll to make up the Minimum Wage.

Smart Meters will help people save money on fuel bills

Thousands of people in Northamptonshire will benefit from the smart meter roll-out that comes a step closer this week. The government has set out the options for installing the revolutionary kit in homes across Great Britain and on what the smart meters should be capable of doing.

Smart meters will mean:

- No more estimated bills
- No more waiting for the meter man
- More info to help with cutting energy use, saving money and reducing your carbon footprint.

Smart meters enable meter readings to be taken remotely and together with a display device give householders real time information on their energy use. In trials some households

estimate they have saved as much as 10% off their bills by changing the way they use energy and cutting back when rates are at their highest.

Smart meters will offer real help to people looking to save energy and that means saving money too

The more information you have about the energy you use, the more chance you have to use it more wisely, cut back where you don't need to and switch to cheaper tariffs.

Smart meters are good news for everyone who wants to save money and cut back on CO2 emissions which cause climate change.

Cracking down on dodgy landlords

Real help for tenants

This week I was told about a major new package of measures that are being looked at to strengthen protection for tenants living in private rented accommodation.

There is no doubt we need to improve the quality of the private rented sector. There needs to be more professionalism, bad landlords need to be driven out and there needs to be more protection for tenants affected by repossessions.

These are the bits that caught my eye.

- A new **national register of every private landlord** in England to increase protection for both vulnerable tenants and good landlords. Landlords will need to include their registration number on all tenancy agreements and could be removed from the register for persistent poor performance like failing to carry out essential repairs, or not protecting tenants' deposits.
- An **improved complaints and compensation procedure for tenants**. For the first time, the Government will look to set up a system whereby tenants are able to register official complaints about sub-standard landlords, and if these complaints are substantial and proven then landlords may be removed from the national register.



The Government also wants to change the law to ensure that tenants have a minimum two months' notice if they have to leave their home because their landlord has been repossessed.

It is not right that tenants through no fault of their own can be forced to leave their home at a moment's notice if their landlord is repossessed, which is why we are intending to change the law.

At the moment, a gap in legal protections means that some tenants could be evicted at short notice if their landlord is repossessed - sometimes with less than two weeks to move their belongings and find somewhere new to live.

These changes are part of wider the Government has put in place to support households at risk of repossession in the current economic climate.

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