



Department for  
Business, Energy  
& Industrial Strategy

## NATIONAL MINIMUM WAGE AND NATIONAL LIVING WAGE

Policy on HM Revenue & Customs  
enforcement , prosecutions and  
naming employers who break  
National Minimum Wage law

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# Section 1: Introduction

1.1 The Government is committed to increasing support for lower and middle income earners and improving the rewards to work. The National Living Wage (NLW) and the National Minimum Wage (NMW) provide protection to low income workers and incentives to work. The NMW/NLW helps business by driving fairness in the labour market ensuring that competition is based on the quality of goods and services provided and not on low prices driven by low rates of pay.

1.2 This Government is absolutely clear that anyone entitled to be paid the NMW and the NLW should receive it.<sup>1</sup> The enforcement of the NMW and NLW is therefore essential and we are committed to cracking down on employers who break the law in this area in all sectors across the economy. This document sets out how the Government operates the civil and criminal enforcement of the NMW/NLW. The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) is responsible for NMW policy, including the policy on compliance and enforcement. HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) enforce the NMW Act on behalf of BIS.

## Recent developments

1.3 The National Living Wage applies to workers aged 25 and over from 1 April 2016. This new rate of pay was introduced through amendment to the National Minimum Wage Regulations 2015 to ensure that the rules that apply to the National Minimum Wage rates for workers aged under 25 also apply to workers entitled to the National Living Wage. In line with the policy set out in this document, HMRC will enforce the National Living Wage as part of the National Minimum Wage framework. For ease of reference, the remainder of this document uses 'minimum wage' as a collective term to refer to both the National Minimum Wage and National Living Wage.

1.4 The introduction of the NLW increases the number of workers paid at a statutory minimum rate. This, along with an increase in the number of sectors affected by the minimum wage, could raise non-compliance risks. For this reason, the Government has announced a package of measures to improve compliance and strengthen the enforcement of the minimum wage. This includes increasing financial penalties for non-compliance from 100% to 200% of the arrears employers owe, setting up a dedicated team in HMRC focused on tackling the most serious cases of non-compliance, and further increasing HMRC's enforcement budget.

1.5 In addition, increases in both the level of participation in the labour market and the reported incidences of exploitation have required the Government to consider the effectiveness of the way it tackles non-compliance with labour market regulation through its consultation 'Tackling Exploitation in the Labour Market' (December 2015)<sup>2</sup> run jointly between BIS and the Home Office. The Government published its response to the consultation in January 2016, setting out a number of proposals to tackle labour market

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<sup>1</sup> The BIS Calculating the Minimum Wage guidance sets out the rules on how the National Minimum Wage and National Living Wage are calculated: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/514897/BIS-16-144-nmw-calculating-the-national-minimum-wage.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/514897/BIS-16-144-nmw-calculating-the-national-minimum-wage.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/471048/BIS-15-549-tackling-exploitation-in-the-labour-market.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/471048/BIS-15-549-tackling-exploitation-in-the-labour-market.pdf)

exploitation, two of which will directly impact on how the minimum wage is being enforced by HMRC.<sup>3</sup> Firstly, to establish a statutory Director of Labour Market Enforcement, who will set priorities for the enforcement bodies across the spectrum of non-compliance. Secondly, to create a new type of enforcement order, a labour market enforcement undertaking, supported by a criminal offence for non-compliance. These changes have been implemented through the Immigration Act.

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<sup>3</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/491260/BIS-16-11-government-response-to-tackling-exploitation-in-the-labour-market.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/491260/BIS-16-11-government-response-to-tackling-exploitation-in-the-labour-market.pdf) <sup>4</sup> Subject to the detailed rules that apply under the National Minimum Wage Regulations 2015 in relation to which payments count as national minimum wage.

# Section 2: Background

## 2.1 Entitlement to the National Minimum Wage and National Living Wage

2.1.1 The National Minimum Wage Act 1998 (“the 1998 Act”) introduced a statutory right to be paid a certain amount of remuneration for work performed. Almost all workers in the UK are entitled to the National Minimum Wage minimum wage or the National Living Wage. Workers are defined in Section 54 of the 1998 Act.

2.1.2 A qualifying worker who is paid less than the minimum wage for any pay reference period is legally entitled to be paid arrears by his employer (section 17 of the 1998 Act, as amended by section 8 of the Employment Act 2008).

2.1.3 Arrears are the difference between the remuneration received by the worker and the minimum wage rate which applied at the time they were underpaid.<sup>4</sup> However, from 6 April 2009, where the current rate of minimum wage is higher than the rate that applied at the time of the underpayment, the arrears are calculated by reference to the current rate (see paragraph 3.6.4).

2.1.5 The Secretary of State has appointed HM Revenue & Customs (“HMRC”) to act as enforcement officers for the purposes of the minimum wage. HMRC’s enforcement of employers’ obligations to pay workers the minimum wage is focussed on the workers’ right to receive what they are entitled to.

2.1.6 In the agricultural sector, agricultural workers in England must be paid at least the minimum wage. Workers employed before the [rules changed on 1 October 2013](#) still have the right to the Agricultural Minimum Wage if it says so in their contract. In Wales, under the Agricultural Sector (Wales) Act 2014, agricultural wages and employment conditions in Wales are governed by the Agricultural Wages (Wales) Order 2016, which came into force on 26 February 2016.

2.1.7 This policy statement only deals with enforcement of the minimum wage by HMRC.<sup>5</sup> The policy contained in this document will be kept under close review by BIS and HMRC to ensure that it reflects the Government’s priorities for compliance and enforcement. The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) will be consulted on any changes to the policy on prosecuting minimum wage offences.

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<sup>4</sup> Subject to the detailed rules that apply under the National Minimum Wage Regulations 2015 in relation to which payments count as national minimum wage.

<sup>5</sup> A worker may commence proceedings against his employer to recover arrears:

- in the employment tribunal (or, in Northern Ireland, the industrial tribunal) for a breach of Part II of the Employment Rights Act 1996 (or Part IV of the Employment Rights (Northern Ireland) Order 1996) as an unlawful deduction from wages claim or a breach of contract claim; or

- in the County Court (or, in Scotland, the Sheriff Court) as a breach of contract claim.

# Section 3: Policy on HMRC civil enforcement

## 3.1 Background

**3.1.1** The Government recognises that the civil powers contained in the 1998 Act (as amended by the Employment Act 2008) will be sufficient in the great majority of cases. Criminal investigation is appropriate for the small minority of employers that are persistently non-compliant or refuse to cooperate with compliance officers (as set out in section 4).

## 3.2 Powers of compliance officers

**3.2.1** The Employment Act 2008 amended the 1998 Act to give compliance officers the power to take information away from the employer's premises (or the premises where the information is held) to copy it. When information is removed from the employer's premises – either because the employer agrees to its removal or the power to remove records is exercised – compliance officers must act in accordance with HMRC rules regarding data security. Records should generally be returned to employers within seven days of removal.

**3.2.2** Material taken from meetings with employers (such as notes and original or copy business records) are to be treated in the same way as HMRC handles customer's files, that is, they are to be kept safe at all times as set out in HMRC guidance until returned to the employer. Officers are expected to give a receipt to the employer or their adviser or agent. Officers should ensure that the receipt lists the specific records (or copy records) being collected and removed. A copy of the receipt must be made and kept with the investigation papers.

**3.2.3** HMRC can only accept electronic data in certain formats and the employer must agree to write or download the information to a disk or data stick. The disk or data stick must not be removed from the employer's premises; the data must be copied onto the secure area of the compliance officer's encrypted laptop in situ. The laptop must be transported in accordance with HMRC guidance.

## 3.3 When a Notice of Underpayment should be issued

**3.3.1** The Employment Act 2008 amended the National Minimum Wage Act 1998 to replace enforcement and penalty notices with a single Notice of Underpayment. These changes came into effect on 6 April 2009. A Notice of Underpayment should be issued where a compliance officer finds that arrears of minimum wage were outstanding at the start of an investigation, though HMRC have discretion over the issuing of an NoU, as set out in paragraph 3.3.7. The "start of an investigation" is defined as the date a compliance officer first contacts the employer (either by telephone or writing, or both).

**3.3.2** One of the Government's main policy aims for the changes brought in by the Employment Act 2008 is to ensure that there is a sufficient deterrent against underpayment of the minimum wage. The 2008 Act changed the basis for imposing a

penalty on an employer from non-compliance with the requirements of an enforcement notice to non-compliance with the requirement to pay workers the minimum wage. The “start of an investigation” is the trigger point that is used to determine whether, in principle, a penalty should be imposed on the employer for non-compliance with the minimum wage.

**3.3.3** A Notice of Underpayment should be issued where the employer has repaid the arrears to the worker subsequent to the start of the investigation and before the date the notice is issued.

**3.3.4** The reasons for the underpayment should not be taken into account when determining whether or not to issue a Notice of Underpayment. Notices should be issued where arrears are outstanding at the start of an investigation, notwithstanding that the employer claims that the underpayment of minimum wage was accidental.

**3.3.5** A Notice of Underpayment should be issued where an employer has partly repaid arrears before the start of an investigation (for example, by repaying the underpayment calculated in accordance with section 17(2) but not the arrears calculated in accordance with section 17(4)).

**3.3.6** A Notice of Underpayment should ordinarily not be issued where an employer has paid workers below the applicable minimum wage rates but has correctly repaid all the arrears that are owing to the workers before the start of an investigation, including where they have self-corrected, for example in response to HMRC nudge activity.

**3.3.7** HMRC compliance officers have discretion over whether to issue an NoU. While it is expected that an NoU will be issued in almost all situations where HMRC have become aware of minimum wage arrears, there may be specific circumstances - separate to where employers self-correct (see paragraph 3.3.8) - when HMRC officers decide that the employer should not be issued with an NoU, and as such should not be subject to enforcement action, be named or face a financial penalty. Each decision to issue an NoU should be made on a case by case basis.

**3.3.8** HMRC officers may also require some employers to self-correct. For example, HMRC officers may issue an NOU for the full arrears for all current employees and require the employer to self-correct for ex-employees, or issue an NOU only for the complainant worker, requiring the employer to self-correct for all other workers. In all cases of self-correction HMRC ensures that the workers receive the money they are due. If an employer fails to self-correct, HMRC reopens the case and issues an NOU for all arrears due. In such cases the employer may be named twice.

## **3.4 Withdrawal and reissue of Notice of Underpayment**

**3.4.1** A compliance officer may withdraw a Notice of Underpayment if it subsequently appears to him that the notice incorrectly includes or omits any requirement, or is incorrect in any detail. The officer may, at the same time as withdrawing the original notice, issue a replacement Notice of Underpayment. Only one replacement notice may be issued.

**3.4.2** A replacement Notice of Underpayment cannot include a worker who was not included in the original Notice of Underpayment [section 19G(2)]. Where a notice has been

issued and an officer subsequently finds that an additional worker not included in that notice is owed arrears, the officer should issue a new notice for that worker.

### **3.5 Issue of Notice of Underpayment where there are/may be criminal proceedings**

**3.5.1** Section 19B of the 1998 Act allows a compliance officer to issue a Notice of Underpayment with a provision suspending the requirement for the employer to pay a penalty where proceedings have been instituted, or may be instituted, against an employer in respect of a criminal offence under section 31 of the 1998 Act in respect of the same pay reference periods covered by the notice of underpayment.

**3.5.2** The decision whether to issue a notice containing such a provision should be made on a case by case basis, having regard to the interests of the workers and whether doing so would risk prejudicing the success of the prosecution.

### **3.6. Quantification of arrears**

**3.6.1** This Government believes that where a worker has been underpaid the minimum wage, the arrears that are repaid to the worker must take account of the length of time that has elapsed since the underpayment.

**3.6.2** A Notice of Underpayment requires an employer to repay to the worker or workers the amount of arrears outstanding on the "relevant day" as a result of underpayment of the minimum wage for the pay reference periods ending before the relevant day which are specified in the notice.

**3.6.3** The "relevant day" is defined as a day on which a sum was due under section 17 for one or more pay reference periods ending before that day. Where more than one worker is named on the Notice of Underpayment, the relevant day may be different for each worker.

**3.6.4** As set out in paragraph 3.6.1, where a worker has been underpaid the minimum wage, the arrears that are repaid to the worker must take account of the length of time that has elapsed since the underpayment. Where the rate of minimum wage at the time the arrears are calculated is higher than the minimum wage rate that was in force at the time the underpayment occurred, the arrears should be calculated by reference to the current rate (in accordance with section 17(4)).

**3.6.5** The underpayment of minimum wage (that is, the difference between the remuneration received by the worker and the minimum wage rate which applied at the time they were underpaid [section 17(2)]) is divided by the rate of minimum wage that applied at the time of the underpayment and then multiplied by the rate of minimum wage that is currently in force.

**3.6.6** Where a worker changes age bands, the current rate of minimum wage to be used in the calculation of arrears should be the current rate for the band that applied to the worker at the time the arrears accrued. So, for example, arrears incurred when the worker was aged 16-17 would be calculated by reference to the current 16-17 rate, not by reference to the **current** 21-24 year old rate (even if the worker is now 21 or over).

## 3.7 Penalty and quantification of penalty

**3.7.1** The Secretary of State may, by directions, specify circumstances in which a Notice of Underpayment should not impose a penalty [section 19A(2)]. Where the notice includes a requirement to pay a penalty, the penalty may be suspended where criminal proceedings are envisaged or commenced (see paragraph 3.5 below).

**3.7.2** The Secretary of State has issued a direction that a Notice of Underpayment should not include a penalty where an employer has followed written or published guidance obtained from a Government department or its agency about the employer's compliance with minimum wage requirements and this guidance is incorrect.

**3.7.3** This direction would only apply where the employer can demonstrate to the compliance officer that they have:

- sought written or published guidance from a Government department or agency that was applicable to their situation; and
- obtained written or published guidance; and
- correctly followed that guidance; and
- the compliance officer considers that the written or published guidance obtained by the employer was incorrect.

## 3.8 Revised minimum wage penalty percentage

**3.8.1** The Government has increased the penalties imposed on employers that underpay their workers in breach of the minimum wage legislation from 100% to 200% of arrears owed to workers. By increasing penalties for underpayment of the minimum wage it is intended that employers, who would otherwise be tempted to underpay, comply with the law and working people receive the money they are legally due. This forms part of the wider package of measures set out in paragraph 1.2 intended to further strengthen enforcement of the minimum wage.

**3.8.2** The increased National Minimum Wage penalty came into effect on 1 April 2016. The revised penalty will apply to any notice of underpayment relating to a pay reference period beginning on or after 1 April 2016. The penalty percentage has been increased from 100% to 200%. The maximum penalty is £20,000 per worker. The revised penalty is calculated as 200% of the total underpayment for all of the workers specified in a Notice of Underpayment relating to pay reference periods that commence on or after 1 April 2016. Where this amount would be less than £100, the minimum penalty of £100 should still be applied. Where this amount would be more than £20,000, the maximum penalty of £20,000 per worker should be applied. The penalty is reduced by 50% if the unpaid wages and the penalty are paid within 14 days.

**3.8.3** The table below sets out the penalty calculations for minimum wage underpayment according to the time of the pay reference period in which the NoU was issued. For arrears falling across these periods, HMRC will issue NoUs according to the table below to ensure

employers pay the maximum penalty for the arrears they owed in each pay reference period.

**Table: Penalties for minimum wage underpayment**

Time of pay reference period in which NoU was issued	Penalty as a percentage of arrears	Penalty cap
Pre 7 March 2014	50%	£5000 per employer
Between 7 March 2014 and 25 May 2015	100%	£20,000 per worker (implemented through HMRC issuing multiple NOUs)
Between 26 May 2015 and 1 April 2016	100%	£20,000 per worker
Post 1 April 2016	200%	£20,000 per worker

### 3.9 Enforcement on behalf of seafarers

**3.9.1** Section 1 of the National Minimum Wage Act applies the minimum wage to a worker who ‘is working, or ordinarily works’ in the UK. Section 40 of the Act provides that a seafarer who works on a UK flagged ship is to be treated as ordinarily working in the UK unless either their employment is wholly outside the UK or they are not ordinarily a resident in the UK.

**3.9.2** The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea generally precludes the Government from applying UK law to foreign flagged vessels in UK territorial waters, on the grounds that this would interfere with their right of innocent passage. In addition, the Government abides by the international custom and practice of not interfering in the “internal economy” of foreign flagged vessels whilst in UK internal waters and ports.

# Section 4: Policy on HMRC criminal enforcement

## 4.1 Background

**4.1.1** As set out in section 3.1.1, the civil powers contained in the 1998 Act (as amended by the Employment Act 2008) will be sufficient in the great majority of cases. For the small minority of employers that are persistently non-compliant and refuse to cooperate with compliance officers, criminal investigation is appropriate. Prosecutions will not necessarily result in arrears being paid to workers, and further enforcement action may still be required to ensure that workers are repaid their arrears.

The 1998 Act therefore makes provision for criminal proceedings to be brought for offences under section 31 of that Act. The offences cover a range of possible non-compliant behaviour, summarised below:

Section	Offence
31(1)	Employer refuses or wilfully neglects to pay NMW
31(2)	Person fails to keep or preserve NMW records
31(3)	Person knowingly causes or allows false entry in NMW records
31(4)	Person produces or furnishes false NMW records or information
31(5)(a)	Person delays or obstructs NMW compliance officer
31(5)(b)	Person refuses or neglects to answer any questions, furnish information or produce documents when required to do so

**4.1.2** The objective of these criminal offences is to support the underlying mechanisms for enforcement of the minimum wage by ensuring that payment of the minimum wage and the role of the compliance officer are taken seriously. Employers who commit an offence under the 1998 Act are liable to criminal prosecution and as such may be liable to a fine.

**4.1.3** Criminal investigations will be conducted by officers within HMRC's Fraud Investigation Service, who are trained to carry out investigations to a criminal standard. The Crown Prosecution Service ("CPS") are solely responsible for deciding whether there

is sufficient evidence to provide a realistic prospect of conviction and whether a prosecution is in the public interest.

## 4.2 General criteria for prosecution cases

**4.2.1** HMRC and BIS will operate a policy of selective criminal investigations to bolster our overall enforcement strategy. “Selective” means that HMRC will investigate only the most serious cases. This is intended to encourage and improve voluntary compliance with the provisions of minimum wage legislation across the business community.

**4.2.2** HMRC will also investigate minimum wage offences in the context of the whole pattern of criminality where an employer’s conduct also involves, for example, a suspected tax fraud, or cross-government offences such as employing illegal workers.

**4.2.3** There is a balance to be struck between effectiveness and value for money in enforcement. The focus of HMRC investigators must therefore be on cases where prosecution will do most to promote compliance with the law by deterring employers who deliberately disregard the 1998 Act. In a case of failure to pay, the size of the alleged arrears will not, of itself, be the determining factor in the decision to start or continue with a criminal investigation. The CPS will consider the evidence provided in support of prosecution and take a decision as to whether it is in the public interest to prosecute.

**4.2.4** BIS and HMRC will keep this approach under review and it may be adjusted both in the light of experience with the approach and also in line with other Government initiatives. It is possible, for example, that there may be linkages between the approach on criminal investigations and targeted enforcement in specific trade sectors.

## 4.3 Likely offences

### *Employer obstruction*

**4.3.1** Criminal sanctions are needed to tackle employers who refuse to allow compliance officers access to business records and will not respond to other enquiries about minimum wage compliance. HMRC may be able to tackle obstruction in such circumstances through a Notice of Underpayment. A notice may be served if a compliance officer uses his/her best judgement to determine that a worker has not been paid the minimum wage for any pay reference period [section 19(1)]. In many cases, HMRC will have sufficient information to form an opinion, but there will be instances where HMRC hold no evidence to calculate the level of arrears or even establish the identity of workers who have been underpaid. In such cases a criminal investigation followed by a prosecution determined by CPS under section 31(5)(a) or (b) would send clear signals to employers that they must co-operate with minimum wage compliance officers.

### *Repeated failures*

**4.3.2** The Employment Act 2008 changes the enforcement regime for the minimum wage to provide for a penalty to be imposed on employers who do not comply with the requirement to pay their workers the minimum wage. However, additional sanctions are necessary to deter the determinedly non-compliant.

**4.3.3** An employer who repeatedly fails to either pay the minimum wage or keep sufficient records for minimum wage purposes could be prosecuted by the CPS under section 31(1) or (2) of the 1998 Act. Such a case would send a clear message to other would-be recidivist employers that non-payment of minimum wage or a failure to keep records is not a risk-free occupation.

**4.3.4** As set out in paragraph 1.2, the Government is creating a new type of enforcement order, a Labour Market Enforcement Order, supported by a criminal offence for non-compliance. The new order is specifically targeted at those employers who deliberately, persistently and brazenly commit breaches of labour law, and fail to take remedial action. This cannot always be done satisfactorily through repeated use of existing penalties or offences, which may lead to continued exploitation of workers.

**4.3.5** Under the new order, HMRC (as well as the enforcement bodies covered by the legislation the Employment Agency Standards (EAS) Inspectorate and the Gangmasters Licensing Authority (GLA)) will have the power to request that a business which has already repeatedly or very seriously breached labour market legislation enters into an undertaking to take steps to prevent further labour market offending. This will provide a proportionate mechanism for enforcement bodies to address non-compliant behaviour by working with the business and will be governed by a Code of Practice. This will be used alongside current penalties for failure to pay the National Minimum Wage so that workers will continue to receive the money they are owed.

**4.3.6** If a business refuses to enter into or fails to comply with the undertaking (or separately is convicted of a labour market offence), a magistrates' court (or Sheriff's Court in Scotland or court of summary jurisdiction in Northern Ireland) will have the power to impose a Labour Market Enforcement Order requiring the business to take steps to avoid the commission of further labour market offences.

### Failure to keep or preserve minimum wage records and falsifying records

**4.3.7** HMRC regard both the failure to keep or preserve records and the falsification of records as serious offences. When considering whether to take action for failing to keep or preserve records or the falsification of records, HMRC will look at the surrounding circumstances and are likely to prosecute where the offence is combined with other offences, repeated or deliberate.

## 4.4 General criteria for selection of cases

**4.4.1** HMRC refer the most serious cases for criminal investigation to the CPS, as set out in paragraph 4.1.4. Each case is selected for prosecution on its own merits. However, we would expect to see common features in each case selected for criminal investigation:

- In cases under section 31(1), the number of workers involved would normally exceed five and there would normally be at least one previous instance of a failure to pay by the same **employer** which required action in either the civil courts or the employment tribunal to enforce payment.
- Generally cases under section 31(2) to (4) will not be the subject of a criminal investigation except in the context of another offence under section 31.

- In cases under section 31(5)(a) and (b) there would normally have been two or more occasions on which a refusal has taken place.

## **4.5 New Director of Labour Market Enforcement**

**4.5.1** As set out in paragraph 1.5, the Government will create a new Director of Labour Market Enforcement (“the Director”) in order to provide better leadership and co-ordination of the efforts of the three enforcement bodies working across the spectrum of labour market enforcement - the HMRC NMW team, EAS and the GLA - with a common view of risk and priorities drawn from shared intelligence. This will allow joint strategies to be set and resources to be allocated in the best way to achieve the Government’s aims of tackling exploitation and ensuring compliance. The Director will hold a statutory position, and this will again be implemented through changes to the Immigration Act.

**4.5.2** The Director’s remit will stretch across the whole of the labour market – including direct employment as well as labour providers – and the whole of the spectrum of non-compliance, from accidental infringement to serious criminality.

**4.5.3** The Director will lead an intelligence hub that forms a coherent view of the nature and extent of exploitation and non-compliance in the labour market, and use this to formulate the strategy. The intelligence hub will primarily be drawn from HMRC’s NMW Enforcement Teams, GLA, EAS/BIS and the Home Office, retaining strong links to those bodies.

# Section 5: Policy on naming employers who break National Minimum Wage law

## 5.1 Background

**5.1.1** In October 2010 the Government announced a new scheme to name employers who break minimum wage law. The naming scheme came into effect on 1 January 2011.

**5.1.2** The objective of the naming scheme is to raise awareness of minimum wage enforcement and deter employers who would otherwise be tempted to break minimum wage law. The Government recognises that some employers are more likely to respond to the social and economic sanctions that may flow from details of their payment practices being made public, than from financial deterrents<sup>6</sup>.

**5.1.3** The naming scheme will ensure that the public and businesses, including workers, prospective workers, and law abiding employers, have access to information which will enable them to make informed choices about who they work for (in the case of workers) and who they do business with (in the case of employers and the general public). The Government envisages that raising awareness of minimum wage enforcement in this way could also encourage more workers who have been underpaid to come forward.

**5.1.4** The Government is clear that the naming scheme is not an alternative to prosecutions. Employers will not be named under the scheme whilst prosecution proceedings are in hand or are being considered. Where a potential prosecution case is rejected by the Crown Prosecution Service, the employer will still be named. Those who are prosecuted will then also be named.

**5.1.5** Under the original scheme employers had to meet one of seven criteria plus a financial threshold before they could be named (see sections 5.4 and 5.5 on the original naming criteria).

**5.1.6** The Government has revised the scheme, coming into effect on 1 October 2013.

## 5.2 Revised National Minimum Wage Naming Scheme (from 1 October 2013)

**5.2.1** The revised scheme will apply to any employer that is investigated by HMRC and issued with a Notice of Underpayment from 1 October 2013 onwards. For cases in which

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<sup>6</sup> Such as the automatic penalty which was brought in by amendments to the National Minimum Wage Act which came into effect on 6 April 2009.

an investigation commenced before 1 October 2013, the previous naming scheme criteria and process applies (see section 5.4).

## 5.3 Naming policy

**5.3.1** An employer that is breaking minimum wage law will be issued with a Notice of Underpayment by HMRC. This is a formal notice that sets out the arrears of minimum wage to be repaid by the employer together with the penalty for non-compliance with the requirement to pay workers the minimum wage. An information sheet is given to the employer at the start of the investigation which sets out details about the BIS naming scheme. The employer will have 28 days to appeal against the Notice of Underpayment issued by HMRC.

**5.3.2** If the employer does not appeal<sup>7</sup> or an appeal has been unsuccessful HMRC will refer the employer to BIS to be considered for naming once the HMRC case closure letter has been issued to the employer.

**5.3.3** BIS only consider cases for naming where the total arrears owed to workers are more than £100. This financial criterion will be kept under review to ensure that the naming scheme continues to meet the policy objectives outlined in paragraph 5.1.2.

**5.3.4** The employer will have 14 days from the date of the HMRC case closure letter<sup>8</sup> to make written representations to BIS outlining whether they fall under any of the exceptional circumstances for not being named under the scheme. The exceptional circumstances are:

- Naming by BIS carries a risk of personal harm to an individual or their family.
- There are national security risks associated with naming in this instance.
- Other factors which suggest that it would not be in the public interest to name the employer (employer to provide details).

**5.3.5** In all cases where an employer makes representations to BIS, the employer will need to provide evidence in support of their case for not being named. If an employer seeks advice from a third party, which is incorrect, it does not necessarily mean that the employer will not be named. Employers have a personal responsibility to ensure that they are paying their workers the correct minimum wage rate. If employers have any questions about the minimum wage they can call ACAS on 0300 123 1100 or visit [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk). Representations are sent to [nmw.namingscheme@bis.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:nmw.namingscheme@bis.gsi.gov.uk), or alternatively to:

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<sup>7</sup> If an employer takes an appeal against the NoU to an Employment Tribunal, HMRC will wait for the judgement before forwarding the case to BIS to consider for naming. If the appeal is unsuccessful, HMRC will automatically forward to BIS to consider for naming. HMRC currently publicise the decisions of Employment Tribunal's and County Court Judgements in cases where an employer has unsuccessfully appealed against a NoU and will continue to do so.

<sup>8</sup> A case closure letter is issued in all cases where a Notice of Underpayment has been issued, including cases where the employer has not paid back arrears and this informs the employer that HMRC's Solicitors Office will now pursue this debt through the County Court.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

National Minimum Wage Team - NMW Naming Scheme Representations

Abbey 1, 3rd Floor

1 Victoria Street

LONDON, SW1H 0ET

The details of where to send representations are also provided in the case closure letter.

**5.3.6** If, on receipt of representations from an employer, BIS are satisfied that the employer meets one or more of the exceptional circumstances set out in 5.3.3, the employer will not be named under the naming scheme.

**5.3.7** If BIS do not receive any representations from the employer within 14 days of the date of the HMRC case closure letter or do not accept the representations made by the employer, the employer will be automatically named under the scheme via a BIS press notice. BIS will send a letter to employers stating that they will be named no earlier than 10 days from the date on that letter, attaching the fact sheet that HMRC gave them at the start of the process. BIS will not maintain a public register of employers who have failed to pay the minimum wage or who have been named.

**5.3.8** Where compliance officers pursue payment on behalf of the worker or workers in the civil courts under section 19D(1)(c) of the 1998 Act; or in the employment tribunal under section 19D(1)(a) of the 1998 Act (or, in Northern Ireland, the industrial tribunal under section 19D(1)(b) of the 1998 Act), cases are closed but not referred to BIS for naming until the court or employment tribunal action is complete.

# Annex

## Original Naming Scheme (1 January 2011- 30 September 2013)

For investigations commenced by HMRC for breaking minimum wage law between 1 January 2011 to 30 September 2013, the original naming scheme criteria and process will be applied. This is set out below.

### General criteria for naming cases

HMRC will refer cases to BIS under the naming scheme where they consider that one or more of the following criteria is met<sup>9</sup>:

- i. there is evidence that the employer knowingly or deliberately failed to comply with their minimum wage obligations
- ii. there is evidence that the employer has previously received advice from HMRC about the steps they need to take to ensure future compliance with national minimum wage and has not taken those steps
- iii. there is evidence that the employer has failed to take adequate steps to keep or preserve minimum wage records
- iv. there is evidence that the employer has delayed or obstructed a minimum wage compliance officer in the performance of their duties
- v. there is evidence that the employer has refused or neglected to answer questions put to them by a minimum wage compliance officer
- vi. there is evidence that the employer has refused or neglected to provide information or produce documents to a minimum wage compliance officer
- vii. there is evidence that the employer refused or neglected to pay arrears of the minimum wage to workers, following HMRC intervention, which has resulted in HMRC taking action against the employer to ensure payment of arrears to workers.

### Process for referring cases from HMRC to BIS under the original scheme

At the conclusion of an investigation, if HMRC are satisfied that there is sufficient evidence that an employer meets one or more of the published criteria (see section 5.5) they will

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<sup>9</sup> MRC will only refer cases to BIS under the naming scheme where they have issued a Notice of Underpayment to the employer requiring them to repay arrears of the NMW to a worker(s) or former worker(s). Employers will not be named under the scheme where they have appealed the Notice of Underpayment and their appeal has not been withdrawn or dismissed. Where an employer's appeal against a Notice of Underpayment is partially accepted, but the criteria (including the financial criteria) is still met, the employer may still be named

refer the case to BIS setting out the evidence. If BIS is satisfied that the employer does not meet any of the published criteria no further action will be taken<sup>10</sup> unless the employer fails to comply with the Notice of Underpayment (see criterion vii).

If the case has been referred to the CPS for prosecution, HMRC will not refer the case to BIS under the naming scheme until the outcome of the referral to the CPS or the outcome of the prosecution (if taken forward) has been determined. The fact that a case has been rejected by the CPS does not necessarily mean that an employer will not be named under the scheme as the criteria for naming and prosecution are different. Similarly if the employer chooses to appeal the Notice of Underpayment, the case will not be referred to BIS until the appeal has been concluded. Where the employer successfully appeals against the Notice of Underpayment they will not be named (see footnote 6).

If, having reviewed the evidence, BIS decide that the employer should be named, notwithstanding any representations made by the employer, the employer will be named in a press notice. BIS will not maintain a public register of employers who have failed to pay the minimum wage or who have been named.

If further information that would have affected the decision to name the employer comes to light prior to the press notice being issued, this will be fed into the decision making process. If such information comes to light after the press notice has been issued, for example, where the employer makes late representations which would have had a bearing on the decision to name them, BIS will consider whether it would be appropriate, in the circumstances of the case, to retract the original press notice.

## **Naming Examples under the original scheme**

The following examples are for illustrative purposes only and are not, and are not intended to be, an exhaustive list of the circumstances in which BIS will name an employer.

### **Knowingly or deliberately failed to comply with their minimum wage obligations:**

There is evidence that an employer has intentionally failed to pay the minimum wage to one or more workers (including where the breach has been drawn the employer's attention).

### **Previously received advice from HMRC about the steps they need to take to ensure future compliance with minimum wage and has not taken those steps:**

An employer fails to implement advice given by HMRC and is found to be non-compliant in respect of the same or similar issues/areas on which they received advice.

### **Failed to take adequate steps to keep or preserve minimum wage records:**

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<sup>10</sup> HMRC reserve the right to revisit their decision to refer a case to BIS under the naming scheme once they have closed a case if new information comes to light which suggests that the employer meets one or more of the published criteria.

An employer fails to keep or preserve sufficient records for HMRC to determine whether the minimum wage has been paid and it is necessary to rely on other evidence (e.g. the workers' own records) to establish the debt.

### **Delayed or obstructed an minimum wage compliance officer in the performance of their duties:**

An employer obstructs HMRC's investigation by cancelling, without reasonable explanation, pre-arranged meetings. The obstruction hampers or significantly delays HMRC's investigation. The employer is liable to be named under the scheme notwithstanding the fact that he eventually cooperates.

### **Refused or neglected to answer questions put to them by a minimum wage compliance officer:**

An employer fails to provide satisfactory answers to a compliance officer's questions at interview or in writing. HMRC make a further request to provide.

the information, but still do not receive this information within a reasonable time.

### **Refused or neglected to provide information or produce documents to a minimum wage compliance officer:**

An employer fails to provide documentation which would assist HMRC in establishing whether or not arrears of the minimum wage are owed. The documentation is eventually provided but only after a significant delay.

### **Neglected to pay arrears of minimum wage to workers following HMRC intervention:**

Following an employer's appeal against a Notice of Underpayment being dismissed, the *employer* did not pay the arrears owed to the workers. As a result a claim was made to the civil court to recover the arrears owed.



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