



National Minimum Wage to rise again

I was in the chamber on Wednesday to hear the Prime Minister announce that the minimum wage will rise to £5.73 this October. This means that there has been a 60% rise on the original minimum wage since 1999.

I remember some people said the minimum wage would cost the country 2 million jobs. The reality is as we know totally different.

Nearly one million low paid employees, two thirds of them women, will benefit from the increase.

The Government has also boosted funding for enforcement of the NMW and are planning tough new penalties for rogue employers who underpay staff as part of the **Employment Bill**, now before Parliament. As your MP I'll be supporting this Bill and will vote for it.

I'm proud that, while the Tories opposed the minimum wage and still criticise it, our Labour Government is taking steps to strengthen it - ensuring that employees know their rights and employers know their responsibilities.

I am proud that our country under a Labour Government has a rising minimum wage and has created 3 million jobs.

I know this story contains a lot of numbers and statistics, and I try not to put too many in my newsletters, but remember behind every statistic is a life changed by having the opportunity to work and get on in life. Contrast this with the Tory years - when 3 million people were unemployed.

What are the rises in the National Minimum Wage?

Prime Minister Gordon Brown announced the adult National Minimum Wage rate will rise from £5.52 to £5.73.

The rate for 18-21 year olds will also increase from £4.60 to £4.77, while the 16-17 year old rate will rise from £3.40 to £3.53.

The Tories - attacking the minimum wage

David Cameron now says he is in favour of the Minimum Wage, but in the past he campaigned against the introduction of minimum wage, predicting it would 'send unemployment straight back up.'

"Labour's plans for minimum wages, the Social Chapter and large increases in spending and taxes would send unemployment straight back up."

The Chronicle (Stafford), February 21 1996

Despite his warm words now, David Cameron has put John Redwood in charge of making recommendations on Tory economic policy.

John Redwood has made clear his attitude to the minimum wage hasn't changed. The Commission published its first 'Progress Report' claiming that:

"minimum wages and other labour market regulation has been the last straw for hard pressed lower end industries"

Progress report' of the Conservatives' Economic Competitiveness policy group, 29 September 2006

Labour's Sure Start Centres helping children and families



I was pleased this week to read in an independent report that Sure Start Children's Centres are having a positive impact on the lives of children and families

Children behave better and are more independent if they live in areas with Sure Start Children's Centres. I've seen from working with the Sure Start centres in Hove & Portslade that they are the best

way for us to help all families early on.

Parents bring up children not the Government - and this research shows that Sure Start centres can help parents give their children the best start in life.

Welcoming the report, Ed Balls MP, Labour's Children's Secretary, pledged that more would be done to take Sure Start's work into the communities where it is most needed with a package of measures, backed up with funding and new outreach workers to reach out to the most disadvantaged families.

Outreach workers will provide effective home visiting and other support that will make a real difference to families who cannot access services.

There are now 2,500 Sure Start Centres open, with almost two million families now benefiting from the range of services on offer.