# Over 60,000 workers owed £7.4 million as Pizza Express, British Airways and Capita fail to meet minimum wage laws



Recent revelations from the UK government have highlighted the troubling issue of minimum wage non-compliance among several high-profile companies, with Pizza Express, British Airways, and the outsourcing firm Capita at the forefront. Following extensive investigations conducted by HM Revenue and Customs from 2015 to 2022, it has come to light that over 60,000 low-paid workers are owed back pay totalling £7.4 million, as 518 employers failed to meet the legal minimum wage requirements. This situation raises significant concerns about the enforcement of workers' rights and the integrity of minimum wage laws.

Capita emerged as the most egregious offender, with the company failing to pay £1.5 million to 5,543 of its employees. According to Capita, the underpayments were due to “inadvertent underpayments” that occurred between 2015 and 2021, attributed in part to time management issues for call centre staff. The company claimed to have rectified the situation promptly upon recognising the errors, stating, “All owed monies were paid immediately, and we are sorry for any impact this had on colleagues and former colleagues at that time.” Furthermore, Capita assured that internal processes and systems were updated to prevent future occurrences and that ongoing monitoring would ensure regulatory compliance.

Pizza Express also faced scrutiny, having underpaid £760,702 to approximately 8,470 workers, which equated to an average of £90 each. The company attributed the discrepancies to a “historic unintentional technicality” that persisted between 2012 and 2018. A spokesperson for the restaurant chain emphasised their commitment to rectify any issues once they were brought to light and reaffirmed their dedication to fairly compensating their employees.

British Airways reported failing to pay £231,276 to 2,165 staff between 2014 and 2017, explaining that the underpayment primarily affected cabin crew during their initial months of employment. The airline acknowledged the mistake and indicated that backdated payments had been issued several years ago. Similarly, Halfords faced its own minimum wage challenges. A spokesperson explained that while the company’s pay rates are competitive and aligned with the minimum wage, audits revealed certain historical costs that should have been absorbed by the employer rather than the employees. They quickly moved to address the situation and ensured all costs are now covered by the company.

In light of these findings, Paul Nowak, general secretary of the Trades Union Congress (TUC), called for robust government action against violations of minimum wage regulations, asserting that “wage theft is bad for workers, families, and the economy.” He further noted that every pound taken from a worker not only impacts their financial wellbeing but also their capacity to support local businesses. This sentiment is echoed in the context of recent increases to the National Living Wage, which rose from £11.44 to £12.21 per hour in April, underscoring the ongoing debate over fair compensation in the UK labour market.

As firms like Lidl and Halfords strive to comply with new wage standards—Lidl recently announced significant pay increases for its workers, raising entry-level rates above inflation—it becomes crucial for businesses across all sectors to ensure transparent wage practices. The shared responsibility to uphold employment standards must remain at the forefront to protect the fundamental rights of all workers in the UK.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/may/29/pizza-express-and-british-airways-among-firms-named-for-minimum-wage-failings> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/may/29/pizza-express-and-british-airways-among-firms-named-for-minimum-wage-failings> - An article from The Guardian reports that Pizza Express, British Airways, and Capita are among 518 employers identified by the UK government for failing to pay the legal minimum wage. Over 60,000 workers received back pay totalling £7.4 million following HM Revenue and Customs investigations conducted between 2015 and 2022. Capita was the largest offender, owing £1.5 million to 5,543 workers. Pizza Express owed £760,702 to 8,470 workers, averaging £90 each. The article highlights the importance of enforcing minimum wage laws to protect workers' rights.
3. <https://www.reuters.com/markets/europe/uks-halfords-forecasts-better-than-expected-annual-profit-2025-01-28/> - Reuters reports that Halfords, a UK retailer specialising in bicycles and car products, exceeded profit expectations due to strong holiday sales and a better-than-expected profit forecast for fiscal 2025. The company reported a 13.1% increase in cycling sales and a 5.5% increase in motoring products. Despite this, Halfords anticipates an additional £23 million in labour costs for fiscal 2026 due to upcoming changes in the UK's minimum wage and national insurance contributions.
4. <https://www.reuters.com/business/retail-consumer/lidl-gb-raises-store-workers-pay-by-28-above-inflation-rate-2025-02-10/> - Reuters reports that Lidl GB, the UK division of the German discount supermarket chain, announced a pay increase of at least 2.8% for its 28,000 hourly-paid store workers, effective from March. This rise, which will cost Lidl GB nearly £15 million, exceeds the current inflation rate of 2.5%. Entry-level pay will increase to £12.75 per hour nationally, and up to £13.65 based on tenure, while London rates will begin at £14 per hour, rising to £14.35 over time.
5. <https://corporate.lidl.co.uk/media-centre/pressreleases/2025/lidl-announces-pay-increase-for-28-000-hourly-paid-colleagues-nationwide> - Lidl's official press release announces a market-leading pay increase for 28,000 hourly-paid colleagues, effective from March 2025. Entry-level pay will rise to £12.75 nationally, up from £12.40, and increase to £13.65 with length of service. In London, new starters will see pay rates go up to £14.00, increasing to £14.35 over time. This investment totals almost £15 million, including increases for salaried colleagues across the business.
6. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/czd87ygz10lo> - BBC News reports that Lidl has increased basic wages for its workers, bringing them into line with its discount rival Aldi. The supermarket will lift pay per hour to £12.40 for those outside greater London and £13.65 for employees within the M25 motorway. This means that both German discount chains now pay more than the major supermarket groups in the UK. The new rate comes into force at the beginning of June, the same day as Aldi.
7. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/german-aldi-national-living-wage-london-nhs-b1210098.html> - The Standard reports that Lidl has announced a pay increase for 28,000 workers, effective from March. The new rates will be more than 50p higher than the Government’s new National Living Wage, which was announced in last October’s Budget. Lidl's new rate comes into force at the beginning of June, the same day as Aldi. The National Living Wage, which is set by the government, rose from £10.42 to £11.44 in April and was expanded to include workers over 21 rather than over 23 years old.