# MP warns licence revocation would 'punish community' as East Ham restaurant hit with £180,000 illegal‑working penalty



Sir Stephen Timms has urged Newham’s licensing sub‑committee not to revoke the premises licence for Udaya Kerala Restaurant in East Ham after a Home Office immigration raid found four staff members working without the right to do so. According to the Evening Standard, the business has been hit with a civil penalty of £180,000 and the Home Office has applied for licence revocation. The MP wrote directly to the committee asking members to weigh the consequences of any punitive action for the restaurant and the local community.

In his letter, Sir Stephen argued that the committee should consider the remedial steps the restaurant says it has taken to remedy the breach. The Evening Standard reports the owner told the paper the business has introduced verified right‑to‑work checks, strengthened staff training and begun regular audits. “I hope the [committee] will take into account the steps the business has taken to rectify its mistake, the serious consequences that revoking the licence would have for its future, and the loss that would be suffered by the local community,” the MP wrote to the licensing committee, according to the report. The restaurant, which has traded in East Ham since 1999, is well regarded locally for its Keralan dishes and is described in foodie guides as a valued neighbourhood eatery.

The case comes against a backdrop of stepped‑up illegal working enforcement by the Home Office. Official statistics covering activity between 5 July 2024 and 31 May 2025 show a marked increase in visits and arrests since the general election, recording some 9,000 enforcement visits, 6,410 arrests for suspected illegal working and 1,921 civil penalties issued in that period, with a notable rise in activity in London. Government commentary frames this as part of a broader enforcement drive and the “Plan for Change” priorities.

That stricter environment follows policy changes to civil penalties introduced at the start of 2024. An equality impact assessment published by the Home Office set out revised maximum fines under the right‑to‑work and right‑to‑rent regimes — raising the top level of civil penalties to £45,000 per illegal worker for a first breach and up to £60,000 for repeat breaches. The assessment makes clear those maximums apply in particular circumstances and that mitigating factors, including corrective action, can reduce the final penalty.

Local licensing practice in Newham has already reflected tougher enforcement. Newham Council’s own records show licensing sub‑committee hearings in March 2025 led to licence revocations for some East Ham premises, suspensions for others and additional licence conditions after Immigration Enforcement found illegal workers; councillors cited safeguarding concerns and the borough’s modern slavery strategy in justifying firm action. Those decisions demonstrate how licensing authorities are using powers to address the perceived risks associated with illegal working, including exploitation and harm to legitimate local employment.

The Home Office also publishes quarterly illegal working penalties reports that list employers served with civil penalty notices and set out enforcement outcomes, a transparency measure intended to deter non‑compliance and inform local and national analysis. While the restaurant’s owner insists corrective measures are now in place, the £180,000 penalty reported by the Evening Standard is an example of the large sums employers may face under the current enforcement regime.

The dispute now turns on the licensing committee’s assessment of risk versus mitigation: whether the steps the restaurant says it has taken are sufficient to protect staff and the public and to satisfy licensing objectives, or whether revocation is necessary as a deterrent and safeguarding response. The case illustrates the balancing act confronting local authorities and the Home Office — enforcing immigration rules while weighing the social and economic impact on established local businesses and the communities they serve.

### 📌 Reference Map:

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/london-restaurant-udaya-east-ham-newham-illegal-workers-home-office-minister-stephen-timms-b1242410.html), [[2]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/london-restaurant-udaya-east-ham-newham-illegal-workers-home-office-minister-stephen-timms-b1242410.html)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/london-restaurant-udaya-east-ham-newham-illegal-workers-home-office-minister-stephen-timms-b1242410.html), [[2]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/london-restaurant-udaya-east-ham-newham-illegal-workers-home-office-minister-stephen-timms-b1242410.html), [[7]](https://london.eater.com/maps/best-indian-restaurants-london/udaya-kerala-restaurant)
* Paragraph 3 – [[6]](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/returns-from-the-uk-and-illegal-working-activity-since-july-2024/illegal-working-activity-between-5-july-2024-to-31-may-2025)
* Paragraph 4 – [[3]](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/digital-only-right-to-work-and-rent-checks-equality-impact-assessment/increasing-the-maximum-civil-penalty-amount-for-the-right-to-work-and-right-to-rent-schemes-equality-impact-assessment-accessible)
* Paragraph 5 – [[5]](https://www.newham.gov.uk/news/article/1412/alcohol-licenses-revoked-for-employing-illegal-workers)
* Paragraph 6 – [[4]](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/illegal-working-penalties-uk-report), [[1]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/london-restaurant-udaya-east-ham-newham-illegal-workers-home-office-minister-stephen-timms-b1242410.html)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/london-restaurant-udaya-east-ham-newham-illegal-workers-home-office-minister-stephen-timms-b1242410.html), [[5]](https://www.newham.gov.uk/news/article/1412/alcohol-licenses-revoked-for-employing-illegal-workers), [[6]](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/returns-from-the-uk-and-illegal-working-activity-since-july-2024/illegal-working-activity-between-5-july-2024-to-31-may-2025)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/london-restaurant-udaya-east-ham-newham-illegal-workers-home-office-minister-stephen-timms-b1242410.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/london-restaurant-udaya-east-ham-newham-illegal-workers-home-office-minister-stephen-timms-b1242410.html> - Evening Standard reports that Sir Stephen Timms wrote to Newham’s licensing committee urging it not to revoke the premises licence of Udaya Kerala Restaurant after a Home Office immigration raid found four staff without the right to work. The piece says the business, open since 1999 in East Ham, was issued a £180,000 civil penalty; the Home Office also applied for licence revocation. The article quotes the MP and the restaurant owner describing remedial steps — verified right-to-work checks, staff training and audits — and notes wider government increases in civil penalties and heightened immigration enforcement across London and community impact concerns.
3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/digital-only-right-to-work-and-rent-checks-equality-impact-assessment/increasing-the-maximum-civil-penalty-amount-for-the-right-to-work-and-right-to-rent-schemes-equality-impact-assessment-accessible> - The UK Government’s equality impact assessment explains planned changes to civil penalties under the Right to Work and Right to Rent schemes, raising maximum fines for employers to £45,000 per illegal worker for a first breach and £60,000 for repeat breaches from January 2024. The document sets out rationale, legal basis and expected impacts, and includes tables comparing previous and proposed penalty levels. It clarifies that maximum penalties apply only in particular circumstances and that mitigating factors can reduce amounts. The assessment was published on GOV.UK and forms part of the Home Office’s wider illegal working enforcement reforms across government.
4. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/illegal-working-penalties-uk-report> - The Home Office’s quarterly illegal working penalties report lists employers served with civil penalty notices and details fines issued between 1 October and 31 December 2024. The report publishes employer names, penalty amounts and enforcement outcomes, explaining which businesses have paid or exhausted appeal rights. It provides transparency about civil penalties and is updated periodically with corrections as required. The dataset supports local and national analysis of enforcement activity, showing how fines are distributed across sectors and regions. The GOV.UK publication is intended to deter non-compliance and inform stakeholders about the scale of penalties applied during the specified quarter period.
5. <https://www.newham.gov.uk/news/article/1412/alcohol-licenses-revoked-for-employing-illegal-workers> - Newham Council’s website reports licensing sub-committee decisions to revoke alcohol licences after Home Office Immigration Enforcement identified illegal workers at local premises. The news item describes hearings in March 2025 where licences for two East Ham businesses were revoked, another suspended and extra conditions applied to others, emphasising safeguarding concerns and risks of exploitation. Councillors stressed the importance of proper right-to-work checks and records, citing impacts on wages and local employment opportunities. The page links the action to the council’s modern slavery strategy and frames licence reviews as part of partnership responses to illegal working and exploitation in the borough.
6. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/returns-from-the-uk-and-illegal-working-activity-since-july-2024/illegal-working-activity-between-5-july-2024-to-31-may-2025> - A Home Office statistics release summarises illegal working enforcement between 5 July 2024 and 31 May 2025, reporting a sharp rise in activity since the general election. The note records 9,000 enforcement visits and 6,410 arrests for suspected illegal working in that period, increases of 48% and 51% respectively compared with the previous year. It also states that 1,921 civil penalties were issued and highlights regional breakdowns, including increased action in London. The publication explains methodology, provisional status of figures and links to further immigration system statistics and the government’s Plan for Change enforcement priorities and notes ongoing operational activity.
7. <https://london.eater.com/maps/best-indian-restaurants-london/udaya-kerala-restaurant> - Eater London profiles Udaya Kerala Restaurant in East Ham, praising its authentic Keralan cuisine and recommending dishes such as chicken 65, gobi 65, crab fry and appams. The review describes the modest, cosy dining space decorated with Kerala artefacts and notes seafood as a strong point, crediting spices flown from Kerala. It gives address details and contact number, situating Udaya on Katherine Road and noting its reputation among local diners. The entry positions Udaya as a standout south Indian restaurant in East London, valued for faithful regional flavours and a relaxed, approachable dining experience and occasional media and influencer attention.