**Low Pay Commission urges action on illegal underpayment of apprentices**

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The Low Pay Commission (LPC) today publishes its third stand-alone report into compliance with and enforcement of the National Minimum Wage (NMW). The report uses data from 2019 to investigate the nature and extent of underpayment. This dates from prior to the current Covid-19 outbreak and shutdown, which have had significant impacts for many low-paid workers and their employers.

“The current situation has brought to the attention of all of us the importance of low-paid workers to many of our vital services, including health and social care and the production and distribution of food. The priority is clearly to try to secure the survival of businesses and jobs which are very much at risk. Ultimately, an effective enforcement regime is an essential contributor to the objectives of protecting workers and ensuring a level playing field for businesses too,” said Bryan Sanderson, Chair of the LPC.

The Government has made progress in recent years but more can still be done to protect the most vulnerable, in particular apprentices.

The report examines underpayment of all groups of low-paid workers, but focuses in particular on apprenticeships, where surveys show around one in five apprentices earn less than their legal entitlement. The LPC’s analysis suggests that confusion around the requirement to pay apprentices for their training hours is likely to account for a large proportion of this underpayment.

The LPC makes several recommendations to Government to better protect apprentices, for example, by targeted communications to both apprentices and their employers to highlight underpayment risks, and in particular the problem of non-payment of training hours.