



Justin Madders MP
Minister for Employment Rights, Competition and Markets
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From local shops to global retailers, the convenience sector is united by proud values of serving and supporting the places where people live, work and shop. They are not just relied upon by millions of customers in communities across the country, they are vital employers ensuring workers of all ages and backgrounds can access secure, satisfying, flexible jobs.

This is exactly why businesses like yours are so integral to the success of our Plan to Make Work Pay. The Government is committed to creating jobs that provide security, treat workers fairly, and pay a decent wage. All of these are principles that I know the Association of Convenience Stores (ACS) and its members will agree with. I am grateful for the invaluable insights you have all shared with the Government so far to help shape our plans. As we now take these plans forward, it will remain crucial that we continue working together with convenience retailers to deliver our vision of a more equitable and supportive environment for both employers and workers.

The Employment Rights Bill has now been introduced to Parliament. This will allow the Government to modernise our employment rights framework and respond to the changing world of work. We will help more people get in to work and get on in work; making flexible working the default, establishing a new right to bereavement leave, making paternity and unpaid parental leave available from day one of starting a new job, and strengthening the protections for pregnant women and new mothers returning to work.

We recognise the challenges that convenience stores are facing – from rising operational costs to pressures of inflation – and so we are determined to ensure that our legislation is introduced pragmatically, working with businesses like yours, so that the implementation of these changes can be managed constructively. Businesses will not be expected to make changes overnight. There will be proper, thorough consultation on key details and, with the majority of reforms not expected to take effect earlier than 2026, we will ensure sufficient time to adapt to changes.

But where there are challenges, we are resolved to overcome them together.

For example, on zero-hours contracts, it is right to give workers the opportunity to have more secure and predictable working hours. Our plan will enable over 2 million people on variable hours contracts, who regularly work more than these hours, the ability to move to guaranteed hours contracts; and to ensure that workers get reasonable notice of shifts and working hours with proportionate compensation for any shifts cancelled or curtailed at short notice.

We also know that many employers work hard to give their workers security and predictability. You have told us that in your sector, 98% of workers have stable, permanent contracts and that 90% of employers give at least a week's notice of shift changes. We want these measures to

ensure that those employers, who are doing the right thing, are no longer undercut in an uneven playing field.

That's why we are committed to working with you as employers and with trade unions to get the details right.

We will consult in stages on the zero-hours workers measures. We have first consulted on their application to [agency workers](#) because of the intricacies of the tripartite employment model between agencies, agency workers, and end hirers. We will then consult further on the zero-hours workers measures to inform the details of their implementation.

Similarly, we have gathered views and insights on Statutory Sick Pay and our commitment to remove the Lower Earnings Limit for all employees, and I look forward to reading the responses from businesses across your sector.

And when many convenience stores also face such competition to recruit and retain staff, the steps we are taking within this legislation will also ensure we level the playing field and stop good employers being undercut. Our reforms will raise the floor and end the race to the bottom that saw some compete based on low pay, low standards and insecurity – which benefits neither workers nor good businesses.

We want to make sure businesses like yours are supported to thrive and grow. That is why we have backed the CIPD and the Behavioural Insights Team to launch a [HR consultancy support programme](#), to help small businesses improve how they manage people, and comply with any changes to the law.

Our plan also sits alongside measures outlined by the Chancellor in the Autumn Budget aimed to protect smaller retailers. We are increasing the Employment Allowance to £10,500; making permanent the relief on business rates for retail, hospitality and leisure properties from 2026-27; and freezing the small business multiplier for one year to protect over a million small properties from inflationary bill increases. Taken together, the Budget will ensure convenience stores can employ up to four full-time workers on the National Living Wage before they need to pay any National Insurance contributions.

Through these measures and more, we will deliver our pledge to build an economy that is genuinely pro-business, pro-worker and pro-growth. So as the Bill continues through Parliament, I warmly invite ACS and all its members to work in partnership with us to help ensure our reforms get the right balance and put the principles we all share into practice.

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