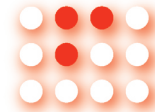
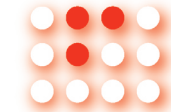


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Proposed tribunal fees to price out justice

Options on a draconian fees system for tribunals have been outlined in a Ministry of Justice consultation paper.

The consultation puts forward two options for consideration one of which is an initial fee of £150 to £250 for a claimant to begin a claim, with an additional fee of £250 to £1,250 if the claim goes to a hearing, with no limit to the maximum award.

The other option is of a single fee of £200 to £600 – but this would limit the maximum award to £30,000 – with the option of an additional fee of £1,750 for those who seek awards above this amount.

In both options, the tribunal would be given the power to order the unsuccessful party to reimburse fees paid by the successful party.

For multiple claims the fee levels depend upon the type of claim, stage in the proceedings and the number of claimants in the claim. At the top end of the scale it could cost £10,500 in fees, where the number of claimants is over 200.

TUC general secretary Brendan Barber said: "Employment tribunals are a key way of enabling

workers to enforce their rights. Government proposals to introduce a fee to lodge an initial claim – and then possibly a further charge for a full hearing – will effectively prevent the poorest and most vulnerable workers from ever being able to get justice.

"It is completely unacceptable that a worker on the minimum wage, who has been underpaid and denied holiday pay, may now have to pay a fee of £250 or more to claim back what they are entitled to because their employer flouted the law."

www.justice.gov.uk/news/press-releases/moj/newsrelease141211a.htm
www.tuc.org.uk/industrial/tuc-20405-f0.cfm

Average earnings

Average weekly earnings, including bonuses, for the whole economy posted an annual rise of 2.0% in October against 1.9% for September.

In the manufacturing sector, earnings growth was down to 1.2% against 2.0% the previous month. However, there was a rise of 2.3% compared with 2.0% the previous month in the service sector and overall private sector earnings growth was up to 2.2% from 1.9% in September.

However, in the public sector, excluding the nationalised banks, earnings growth was down to 1.4% from 1.8% the previous month.

LABOUR RESEARCH DEPARTMENT

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Headline earnings growth (the rolling three-month average) for the whole economy slipped to 2.0% in the three months ending October, against a 2.3% rise for the three-month period ending September.

Manufacturing earnings growth was down to 1.4% from 1.6%, while service sector growth slipped to 2.3% from 2.5%.

In the private sector, growth was 2.1% against the previous three-monthly figure of 2.4%, and the public sector figure was down to 1.7% from 1.8%.

	Average weekly earnings ¹				
	Whole economy	Manufacturing	Services	Private sector	Public sector ²
£ a week					
2010					
October (r)	455	525	441	451	461
November	456	523	442	452	461
December	458	524	441	451	461
2011					
January	456	529	441	451	462
February	457	520	442	452	462
March	461	550	447	458	463
April	460	528	446	456	464
May	462	528	448	458	465
June	462	530	449	459	465
July	463	530	450	460	467
August (r)	463	530	450	460	468
September (r)	463	535	450	460	468
October (p)	464	531	451	461	468
% annual change					
Single month	2.0	1.2	2.3	2.2	1.4
3-month average ³	2.0	1.4	2.3	2.1	1.7

¹ Average weekly earnings in Great Britain, seasonally adjusted, including bonuses, but excluding arrears. ² Excludes financial services. ³ Average of the seasonally adjusted data for the latest three months compared with three months a year earlier. (p) provisional (r) revised

The regular pay figures, which exclude bonuses, show a rise for the whole economy of 2.0% in October against a 1.8% rise the previous month.

The percentage rises in October for the other sectors along with the previous month's figure in brackets were: manufacturing 1.7% (1.8%); services 2.2% (1.9%); the private sector 2.0% (1.9%); and for the public sector, excluding the nationalised banks 1.5% (1.7%).

The three-monthly average rises, excluding bonuses, were: whole economy 1.8% (1.7%); manufacturing 1.6% (1.6%); services 1.9% (1.8%); the private sector 1.8% (1.7%); and the public sector 1.8% (1.8%).

The table below shows estimates of full-time average weekly earnings by occupation. It is based on

the mean earnings figures published by the Office for National Statistics in the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2011, uprated by the 0.9% increase in the average weekly earnings figures between April 2011 and October this year.

Full-time average weekly earnings by occupation

	£ a week
All employees	610.90
All male	665.20
All female	526.50
Managers	910.40
Professionals	810.00
Associate professionals	615.40
Admin & secretarial	425.30
Skilled/craft	501.20
Services	356.70
Sales	333.90
Operatives	458.50
Other manual jobs	356.90

www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/lms/labour-market-statistics/december-2011/index.html

Inflation down

Inflation fell on a slowdown in the rise in food prices and non-alcoholic drinks. Under the Retail Prices Index (RPI), it was down to 5.2% in November from 5.4% the previous month.

Inflation under the government's preferred measure – the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) was down to 4.8% from 5.0% in October. However, this is well above the 2.0% target set by the government for the CPI.

	Price inflation			
	RPI	% increase on a year earlier		
	RPI	RPI	RPIX ¹	CPI
Jan 1987=100				
2010				
August	224.5	4.7	4.7	3.1
September	225.3	4.6	4.6	3.1
October	225.8	4.5	4.6	3.2
November	226.8	4.7	4.7	3.3
December	228.4	4.8	4.7	3.7
2011				
January	229.0	5.1	5.1	4.0
February	231.3	5.5	5.5	4.4
March	232.5	5.3	5.4	4.0
April	234.4	5.2	5.3	4.5
May	235.2	5.2	5.3	4.5
June	235.2	5.0	5.0	4.2
July	234.7	5.0	5.0	4.4
August	236.1	5.2	5.3	4.5
September	237.9	5.6	5.7	5.2
October	238.0	5.4	5.6	5.0
November	238.5	5.2	5.3	4.8

¹ RPI except mortgage interest payments

Half of the 14 groups that make up the RPI posted an increase above the overall rate of 5.2%. The 21.1% rise in the fuel and light group saw domestic oil and other fuel prices up by 26.7%, while gas and electricity prices were up by 25.4% and 15.5% respectively.

The motoring expenditure group saw a 7.2% rise, but that included a 13.0% rise in petrol and oil prices and 15.4% rise in car tax and insurance. Buying a car, on the other hand, was down by 2.2%.

Overall, food prices rose by 4.9%, but there were 24.3% rises in lamb prices, while the healthier option of fish was up by 11.0%. Coffee prices were up 15.4% against a 2.5% rise for tea, while soft drinks rose by 4.7%.

Meanwhile, the price of potatoes fell marginally by 0.3% and fresh fruit prices were 2.6% lower.

More than 5.2%	%	Less than 5.2%	%
Fuel & light	21.1	Food	4.9
Tobacco	12.8	Personal goods & services	4.5
Clothing & footwear	11.5	Catering	4.2
Motoring expenditure	7.2	Household services	3.3
Fares etc	6.2	Leisure services	3.0
Alcoholic drink	6.0	Housing	1.2
Household goods	5.9	Leisure goods	-2.5

www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/cpi/consumer-price-indices/november-2011/index.html

Unemployment figures make grim reading

Youth unemployment hit another grim record high in October as the total number of jobless hit a 17-year high.

According to the Office for National Statistics, there were 1.03 million unemployed 16- to 24-year-olds in the three months ending October – over one in five (22%) of the age group. The latest figure beats last month's as the highest total since records began in 1992.

Meanwhile, the total number of unemployed is at its highest level since 1994, the latest official figures show.

In the three months to October, unemployment under the Labour Force Survey (LFS) count was up sharply by 128,000 to 2.64 million. As a result the unemployment rate was up to 8.3% from 7.9% for the previous three months.

The number of unemployed men rose by 83,000 to 1.54 million and their unemployment rate was up to 9.0% from 8.5%.

There were an additional 45,000 unemployed women, taking their total to 1.1 million and their unemployment rate was up to 7.5% from 7.3%.

On the other official count – the claimant count – the number claiming Jobseeker's Allowance in November rose by 3,000 to 1.6 million. The ninth consecutive monthly rise was, however, not enough to affect the claimant count rate which remained at 5.0%.

The number of male claimants rose by 1,000 to 1.07 million but their jobless rate was steady at 6.2%.

Women claimant numbers rose by 2,000 to 529,100 and their jobless rate remained at 3.6%.

	Unemployment seasonally adjusted			
	Claimants (000s)	% ¹	LFS ² (000s)	%
2006	945	3.0	1,674	5.4
2007	865	2.7	1,654	5.3
2008	906	2.8	1,783	5.7
2009	1,528	4.7	2,394	7.7
2010	1,497	4.7	2,479	7.8
2010				
October	1,463	4.6	2,499	7.9
November	1,460	4.5	2,495	7.9
December	1,455	4.5	2,492	7.9
2011				
January	1,458	4.5	2,518	7.9
February	1,450	4.5	2,478	7.8
March	1,456	4.5	2,455	7.7
April	1,473	4.6	2,430	7.7
May	1,496	4.7	2,452	7.7
June	1,527	4.8	2,494	7.9
July	1,561	4.9	2,510	7.9
August	1,580	4.9	2,566	8.1
September	1,593	5.0	2,622	8.3
October (r)	1,596	5.0	2,638	8.3
November (p)	1,599	5.0		

¹ Percentage of working population – the employees, unemployed, self-employed and the armed forces. ² The Labour Force Survey definition of unemployment – the number of unemployed people who want a job and are ready to start work in two weeks, and have looked for work in the past four weeks. Each figure is the average of the past three months – a rolling average. (p) provisional (r) revised

Regions The LFS count rose in 10 of the 12 regions/countries, and fell in two -Northern Ireland and the East Midlands.

There were large rises of 26,000 in the East of England and 25,000 in Scotland in the three months ending October.

The unemployment rate was above the UK average of 8.3% in seven regions, including the North East where the rate hit 11.7%.

The November claimant count was down in four regions/countries, but up in the remaining eight. The falls were in the West Midlands, South East, Wales and Scotland.

The claimant count rate was above the UK average of 5.0% in seven regions. The highest rates were 7.3% in the North East, 6.9% in Northern Ireland, and 6.3% in the West Midlands.

Region	Nov claimants		LFS Aug – Oct	
	Number	%	Number	%
North East	89,800	7.3	148,000	11.7
North West	199,900	5.7	301,000	8.7
Yorkshire & the Humber	161,200	6.2	253,000	9.5
East Midlands	108,400	4.9	182,000	7.9
West Midlands	169,700	6.3	243,000	9.2
East of England	117,300	4.0	218,000	7.2
London	237,700	4.8	423,000	9.9
South East	142,500	3.2	272,000	6.1
South West	90,100	3.3	177,000	6.6
Wales	78,100	5.5	133,000	9.1
Scotland	143,000	5.3	229,000	8.5
Northern Ireland	60,900	6.9	60,000	6.9

www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/lms/labour-market-statistics/december-2011/index.html

Community members targeted by union

A new membership scheme to ensure that those pushed to the margins of society can benefit from collective power has been launched by the general union Unite.

The union's new community membership is available to students, the unemployed and all others not in work for whatever reason costing just 50p a week.

The scheme offers members a range of financial benefits and services, including a legal advice helpline, a welfare benefits check-up, debt counselling, assistance with CVs, application forms, and interviews and hardship grants.

Community members will be developed as community activists, bringing together people across their locality who have felt left down or excluded by politics to ensure that they too have a voice at a time of economic turmoil and social change for the nation.

Unite general secretary Len McCluskey said: "These are terrible times for ordinary people, but we want to send them a message of hope. So we say now to the millions unemployed, including the young people wasted on the dole and worried for their future, in Unite you have a home."

www.uniteunion.org/news__events/latest_news/community_membership_pledge_to.aspx

Winter weather advice from Acas

Advice on a number of winter problems has been posted on the website of the employment relations experts Acas.

It advises employers that now is the time to make sure they are prepared for those workplace issues that crop up over the winter months.

Issues covered include adverse winter weather, flu and colds; and holiday entitlement.

Acas advises employers to plan ahead as misunderstandings can often lead to conflict.

Acas says employers should have a clear policy – employees need to know what you expect from them in terms of getting to work. And if bad weather hits they should try and use information technology to keep the business running by allowing staff to work from home.

Employers should also be flexible where possible and seek agreement for employees to temporarily alter working hours to minimise disruptions.

Something that workers need to bear in mind is that they are not automatically entitled to pay if unable to get to work because of bad weather. However, employers may have contractual, collective or custom and practice arrangements in place to deal with this problem.

Adrian Wakeling, Acas guidance editor, said: "Winter often brings dilemmas for employers – adverse weather conditions can mean staff shortages due to travel disruption, and seasonal celebrations often result in a stampede to book annual leave."

www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=3554