



GOVERNMENT WHIPS' OFFICE  
HOUSE OF LORDS  
LONDON SW1A 0PW

BARONESS VERE OF NORBITON  
020 7219 3778

Telephone 020-7219 3131  
[www.lordswhips.org.uk](http://www.lordswhips.org.uk)  
[holgovernmentwhips@parliament.uk](mailto:holgovernmentwhips@parliament.uk)

21 December 2017

*Dear Baroness Royall and Lord Watts,*

During Monday's debate following Lord Holmes of Richmond's question on internships, I promised to write to each of you with further details of how the Government is supporting high quality, paid internships and on the Government's plans for the Full Time Social Action Review. Thank you for raising these matters.

The independently chaired Full Time Social Action Review is due to report at the end of January.

With regard to ensuring interns are paid properly, this Government continues to invest heavily in minimum wage enforcement, increasing the budget for it to £25.3 million for 2017/18, up from £13 million in 2015/16. This increased budget has allowed HMRC to carry out more work to take enforcement action against employers underpaying their staff, including more proactive investigations against high risk employers. Furthermore, the upcoming Government communications campaign will seek to raise awareness of the workplace rights for workers – including interns.

The Government has worked to promote high-quality, paid internships through improved codes of practice, awareness campaigns and the Government-sponsored Graduate Talent Pool. It also runs the multi-award winning Summer Diversity Internship Programme (SDIP), which gives people from diverse backgrounds the opportunity to see what a career in the Civil Service is like; by putting talented undergraduates and graduates on a paid work placement in a government department.

However, I will reiterate what I said in the House; we all have a role to play in making sure that individuals get their rights. If anyone in a workplace or wider society sees or hears of a person that is working for no wage, and believes that they should be getting paid, they should complain on behalf of that person. It is up to all of us to play a part and report such behaviour so it can be investigated by HMRC.

Internships and work experience are valuable for many young people as they seek to start their careers. However, employers cannot opt out of their employment law obligations and they must play their part and accept their responsibility to be good employers – and that starts with making sure they pay at least the national minimum wage to all workers, including interns who meet the definition of workers, from day one.

Most employment protections in the UK apply to individuals who are an 'employee' or 'worker'. You will be familiar with the difficulties and legal grey areas over whether someone – such as an Uber driver – should be classified as a worker or as self-employed. Creating a new employment status of 'intern' will only add to these difficulties. Additionally, this further complexity would likely impact the voluntary sector most significantly, where the number of hours being volunteered is already declining.

I am placing a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

*Vere of Norbiton*

**BARONESS VERE OF NORBITON**

Baroness Royall of Blaisdon  
Lord Watts  
House of Lords