Dear Rt Hon Greg Clark MP,

**Include Young Workers aged 18-24 in the National Living Wage**

I am writing to you as a young worker in (region name) to urge you to take action to tackle unequal pay and in-work poverty that faces a generation of young workers in Britain today.

As you will be aware, on the 1st April this year the Government brought in a new National Living Wage which legally requires employers to pay workers £7.20 per hour but only for workers aged 25 and over. However this meant that young workers aged 18-24 who do the same work as their over 25 colleagues can be paid between 7% and 26% less for it, resulting in a massive disparity in pay which denies young workers the basic right to equal pay for equal work, set out in the Equality Act 2010.

Following the recommendation of the Low Pay Commission, the National Minimum Wage rate has been increased slightly this month from £6.70 to £6.95 per hour for workers aged 21-24 and from £5.30 to £5.55 per hour. Despite the small rise in wages this pay inequality continues, with young workers aged 18-24 are still being paid between 3% and 23% less simply because they were born after 1991.

Unfortunately, we have even seen young workers under 25 who were previously paid £7.20 per hour having their pay cut to National Minimum Wage level by their employer as a result of the National Living Wage age-minimum being 25 years old. This pay inequality is feeding the crisis of in-work poverty that is increasingly facing Britain's young workers, and could face many of the 6 million young workers that can be affected by these lower wage rates. Many young adult workers under 25 struggle with the same living costs as over 25s, for them low pay is the one thing trapping them in in-work poverty struggling to afford living in a home of their own and look after their kids.

This is an issue that affects working people of all ages. Including young workers under 25 in the National Living Wage would not just protect them from in-work poverty but also workers over 25 from discrimination in being hired for a job, as unscrupulous employers could currently be inclined to hire the cheaper labour of workers aged under 25 instead. Equal pay makes better work for everyone.

Instead of explaining their reasons for the exclusion of under 25s from National Living Wage, previous Senior Government Ministers have sought to add further distress to young workers struggling to make ends meet but publicly justifying this policy on the belief that young workers are somehow "less productive" than their older colleagues, then admitting in Parliament that there is no evidence to support this.

Previous Government ministers have argued that including under 25s in the National Living Wage would be a wage rise that would harm our chances of employment. However when in 21 year olds were moved from the Youth Development Rate to the National Minimum Wage Rate in 2010, a rise of 22.8%, the Low Pay Commission found no evidence of any negative effects on employment for 21 year olds following the wage rise:*“Looking specifically at 21 year olds, there was an absence of negative employment effects in 2011; on the contrary their employment rates, which had been falling, stabilised until the end of 2011”.*
We believe that there is no excuse to deny anyone equal pay for equal work simply because of their age. This is also the view shared by the wider general public from across the political spectrum. In a poll by Survation in September last year, 66% of voters stated that they believe the higher National Living Wage rate should also be given to workers under 25, with 55% of Conservative Party supporters, 74% of Labour Party supporters and 69% of UK Independence party voters in favour of extending the living wage to under 25s.

By setting the eligibility for the National Living Wage at 25, the UK has the highest threshold for being paid the standard adult rate in the developed world, joined only by Greece. I hope that you take urgent action on this issue to ensure that workers aged 18-24 are included in the National Living Wage rate of £7.20 per hour, ensuring equal pay for equal work for all and preventing a generation of young people suffering from in-work poverty.

Regards,

(name)"