

Britain's biggest firms fined £10m for employing more than 2,000 illegal immigrants

By James Slack

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Some of Britain's biggest companies and restaurant chains are among more than 1,100 firms caught employing illegal immigrants.

Those organisations which have been fined by the Home Office include security firm G4S, Pizza Hut and upmarket eatery Chez Gerard, as well as Wimpy and a BP garage.

Officials said that, over the course of the past 16 months, 1,161 firms, have been fined nearly £10m for flouting employment laws by hiring illegal workers.

Hefty penalty: Pizza Hut was one of the companies fined by the Home Office for employing illegal immigrants in the UK

The 2,058 illegal workers came from countries including Afghanistan, Iraq, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Brazil, Ukraine, Nigeria and China.

The average fine was about £5,000 - half the maximum £10,000 penalty per each illegal employee.

Broken down by region the list of guilty businesses - the overwhelming majority in the restaurant or takeaway sector - has been published by the border police.

Companies in the worst area in Britain - London and the south east - were forced to pay out £3.9million in 'civil penalties' after raids found 815 illegal workers since February 2008.

It includes upmarket London restaurant chain Chez Gerard - who were collared for hiring an illegal worker at one of their 10 eateries in the capital.

Second on the list, comprised of six regions of the UK, was the Midlands and east of England which accounted for 381 workers and £1.7million in fines.

Third was the north-west - including the cities of Liverpool and Manchester - where 148 firms were caught employing illegal labour and had to fork out £1.3million in fines.

Upmarket: Chez Gerard was caught out hiring an illegal worker at one of its 10 eateries in London

Former home office minister Ann Widdecombe said the figures were only the 'tip of the iceberg'.

The Conservative MP added: 'These figures will come as absolutely no surprise to anyone except the government. The problem is almost certainly far greater than these numbers suggest.'



'But the government has been ignoring the magnitude of uncontrolled migration for many years now - this is just the tip of the iceberg.'

'Everyone should be very worried indeed by these figures as the Borders Agency, try as they might, does not have sufficient officers to deal with the influx of illegal workers.'

The figures were released by the Border Agency as it announced a car wash firm operating at major supermarket chains across the south east is facing a record £200,000 fine after officers swooped and found 20 suspected illegal workers.

'Hands-On' vehicle cleaning company faces the fine after officers found three Brazilians, an Ecuadorian, two Nigerians, seven Iranians, four Ukrainians and three Afghan workers.

The raids, carried out at the weekend, targeted seven separate premises in Kent including Ashford, Gillingham and Swanley.

A 'notice of liability' was handed to the firm which now faces a fine of £10,000 per worker if managers are unable to prove they carried out the correct "right-to-work" checks for employing workers outside the EU.

Of the workers caught without papers, 15 men were detained pending deportation from the UK, while five Iranian men were released on immigration bail.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1208991/British-firms-fined-10m-employing-2-000-illegal-immigrants.html>