

A real Living Wage: 25 years in Impact report



One of the most successful social movements of the century



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About the real Living Wage

The real Living Wage remains the only UK wage rate calculated on the real cost of living. It is voluntarily paid by over 16,000 UK businesses who have chosen to transform millions of people's lives and raise the bar for what decent work looks like in the UK.

The real Living Wage is different from the government's legal minimum wage (rebranded as the 'National Living Wage' in 2016). The minimum wage is set by the Government, weighing factors like its impact on youth employment and the wider labour market. The real Living Wage, by contrast, is independently calculated by the Resolution Foundation based on what is needed to cover the cost of living.

About the Living Wage Foundation

We are the movement at the heart of fairer, better work. We're bringing together employers, people and communities across the UK to shape work that works for everyone. We celebrate and recognise the leadership of employers choosing to drive up employment standards.

The Living Wage Foundation was established in 2011 after communities and low paid workers in East London successfully fought for pay that meets the cost of living. Still part of Citizens UK today, the Living Wage Foundation is part of the UK's biggest, most diverse and effective people powered alliance, with accreditation schemes that make change on the issues that matter.

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Foreword



Samantha Brown

Managing Partner, Employment, Pensions & Incentives,
UK & EMEA, Herbert Smith Freehills Kramer

Twenty-five years ago, few people understood what a real Living Wage meant, and fewer still recognised why one was needed. Now, in 2026, thanks to the Living Wage movement, over 4 million employees work for an employer committed to paying the real Living Wage, and more than £4 billion has been transferred to the pockets of workers. The 25th anniversary of this transformative initiative is a significant milestone.

We became an accredited Living Wage employer in 2012 and committed to ensuring that all employees, interns, apprentices and contractors in our UK offices are paid a real Living Wage. This decision was grounded in a clear business case: decent pay supports workforce stability and strengthens our position within our sector. We believe that participating in the accreditation has delivered on these promises. Encouraged by the impact on our business, our people and community, in 2023 HSF Kramer became one of the first employers

– and the first law firm – to join the Living Pension initiative, ensuring that employees can achieve the savings required to meet basic everyday needs after retirement.

Against a backdrop of economic uncertainty, the Living Wage Foundation has expanded its mission, tackling insecure work and ensuring employers deliver a decent standard of living now and in the future. There are now more than 16,000 Living Wage-accredited employers in the UK, and room for many more. A responsible business recognises the role it has to play in delivering economic stability and wellbeing for employees and communities. The Living Wage Foundation has led a movement that has helped improve the lives of so many workers and their families over the past 25 years. At HSF Kramer, we are committed to building on our 14-year partnership in the years to come to ensure this change is long-lasting.

Introduction



Matthew Sparkes

Chair of the Living Wage Advisory Council

The Living Wage movement began with a simple but powerful idea: that work should provide people with the means to live a decent life. What started twenty-five years ago as a local campaign has grown into a national movement for change that has delivered proven, measurable impact for workers, employers and communities across the UK.

Today, more than 16,000 UK employers including well-known names such as Aviva, Ikea, Everton FC and over half of the FTSE 100 have committed to paying the real Living Wage. Together they lifted pay for nearly half a million people.

I have been part of this endeavour for just over half of its life. I have been privileged to witness so many inspiring stories shared by the most remarkable individuals. With the introduction of Living Hours and Living Pension accreditations, I have seen us grow in our offer

for tackling in-work poverty in the UK and, in partnership with the UN, WageMap and others, I have seen us also grow our influence beyond these shores.

But our work is not finished. The real Living Wage has become the standard for responsible employment. The question now is how we extend that standard so that every worker can rely on decent pay and secure work as the norm, not the exception.

So, consider this a moment of celebration and a call to action. Even in difficult years, you've stuck by the commitment you made to your employees to pay a real Living Wage and as a result, transformed lives. That is something to be incredibly proud of. Now it's time to keep that commitment going and help shape the next 25 years of work. I hope you'll continue to lead the way.



The Living Wage movement in numbers

16,000+

Living Wage employers,
covering every
nation and region
of the UK.



£1,400+

The difference each year
between getting paid the real
Living Wage (£13.45) and the
minimum wage (£12.71).¹
In London, the higher London
Living Wage means this
difference is £4,000+ per year.

¹ Full-time is defined as 37.5 hours
of work per week.



450,000+

people in work get paid
more every month thanks
to the real Living Wage.



94%

of Living Wage businesses
say they've benefited
since accrediting.



4.4m

jobs in the UK are still
paid less than the real
Living Wage.



4.1m

people work for Living
Wage employers across
the UK.



42%

of people in jobs paid
less than the real
Living Wage have
used a foodbank
in the past year.



Bernadette and Paul Community organisers in East London

More than a decade before the
Living Wage Foundation officially
launched, the Living Wage
movement was taking shape in
East London. Churches, mosques,
synagogues, schools, unions and
community organisations came
together around a shared concern:
in-work poverty and low pay.

Many workers – including cleaners
and security guards in hospitals
and major financial institutions –
were struggling to survive on the
minimum wage, often juggling
multiple jobs without sick pay while
facing London's high housing and
childcare costs. Activists including
Bernadette Harris, a senior NHS
leader and Catholic activist and
Methodist minister Paul Regan
stood alongside workers and
communities demanding fair pay
and accountability from employers.

Together, they built a movement
calling for a London Living Wage
that reflected the real cost of living.

They knew that by coming
together, telling their stories,
and cultivating relationships with
decisionmakers, workers and civil
society could build the power to win
real change in their communities.
In 2003, Abdul Durrant, a night
cleaner at HSBC, was trained
to take action and speak to the
bank's annual general meeting.
Abdul courageously addressed Sir
John Bond, who earned £2 million
a year as chairman of the bank,
saying: "Sir John, we work in the
same office, but we live in different
worlds. Let me tell you what it's like
to work on £4.50 an hour and bring
up six children." Within eighteen
months, major UK banks in Canary
Wharf had raised cleaners' pay
and were among the first real Living
Wage employers.

Today, the Living Wage movement
spans the UK and is part of a
growing global movement, while
Bernie and Paul continue to
campaign for a real Living Wage in
UK supermarkets and health and
social care. Our movement remains
rooted in the lives of workers and
the same simple aim: work that
works for everyone.



10 milestone moments of the Living Wage movement

2001 The Living Wage movement launches in East London

Citizens UK brought together churches, mosques, schools and other local institutions to talk about the issues affecting their communities. One issue came up again and again: low pay and the impact it was having on family life. Many families were stretched across multiple low-paid jobs, with parents often leaving for work before their children woke up and returning home after they were asleep. Together, low paid workers began to call on major employers in London to pay a real living wage – not just the legal minimum.



2002–03 We start winning – community action sees the first hospitals and banks sign up.



2011
The movement goes
national with launch of
first UK wide real Living
Wage and Living Wage
Foundation established
to recognise and
celebrate the employers
choosing to go beyond
the legal minimum.



2016
The 'National Living Wage' comes
into effect, following success of
our campaign for a real Living
Wage. While challenging for
our movement, it reflected our
growing influence on UK wages.
The rebranded 'National Living
Wage' remains the legal minimum
for workers aged 21+, with only the
real Living Wage reflecting actual
costs of living.



2012
We secure the London
Living Wage for the
2012 Olympics – the
world's first Living
Wage Olympics after
years of campaigning.



2018
The Living Wage goes global
With over one billion workers
worldwide in working poverty, the
Foundation begins exploring the
possibility of developing a global,
collaborative approach to delivering
a real Living Wage (see chapter 5 ☺).



2019
Our Living Hours accreditation
launches to tackle widespread
insecurity over working hours and
shift periods (see chapter 5 ☺).



2020–21
The COVID-19 pandemic hits, and
with it a growing recognition for
the value of our essential workers.
Our movement grows at its fastest
pace as it launches a 'Living Wage
for Key Workers' campaign.



2023
We introduce a Living
Pension accreditation,
an accreditation to provide
workers with financial
security now and in the
future (see chapter 5 ☺).



2026
16,000+ accredited employers and a
brand which has gone mainstream.
The Living Wage movement has
transformed lives, having delivered
over £4bn in pay rises for nearly
half a million low paid workers.
The campaign remains as relevant
today as it ever was. With 4.4 million
UK jobs paid less than the real Living
Wage, community leaders still
organise to end low pay in the UK.





Herbert Smith Freehills Kramer



Emanuela and Palash, members of
HSF Kramer's catering team

HSF Kramer is one of the world's leading global law firms and a longstanding champion of the UK Living Wage movement. They have been a Living Wage Employer since 2012, shortly after the accreditation's launch, and are passionate about ensuring their staff are financially secure during their time at the firm and beyond.



I'm very happy that I got a £2 per hour increase in my wage [compared to my previous employer]. It's very easy for me to manage everything and support my family as well.

Palash
HSF Kramer catering team

Emma Cooke, Director of Responsible Business, says that getting involved in the early days was a "no-brainer" once the team delved deeper and realised that the National Minimum Wage wasn't enough for people to support themselves, noting that

their contracted staff were most affected. Offering a real Living Wage to all employees and onsite contractors has helped HSF Kramer to attract and retain talent, creating a more dynamic workforce that helps the firm to thrive.

The firm has found that clients are increasingly asking whether it pays a real Living Wage and how that commitment extends through its supply chain. This reflects growing awareness of the role businesses play in providing economic security.



Here, the way that people work is totally different from my previous job [...] so I'm very grateful to stay here.

Emanuela
HSF Kramer catering team

HSF Kramer has continuously sought to go further and give back to the movement. They provided pro bono legal advice to develop the original Living Wage standard and subsequently the Living Pension standard and were early adopters of the accreditation when it launched in 2023.

They strongly believe that being a responsible employer means ensuring their staff can live well in the future, not just in the short term. Offering a Living Pension ensures that employees are saving enough for retirement whilst also helping with recruitment, with candidates often asking about the benefits programme and pension contributions.

David Perkins (right), Senior Rewards & Benefits Manager at Herbert Smith Freehills Kramer, accepting the Beyond the Living Wage Award at Champion Awards 2023.

HSF Kramer continue to use their position as one of the biggest law firms in the sector to advocate for the Living Wage and Living Pension, whether through hosting events to raise awareness, or encouraging others to get involved. They remain committed to championing the movement into the future, recognising the ongoing challenges faced by those on low pay.





02 People

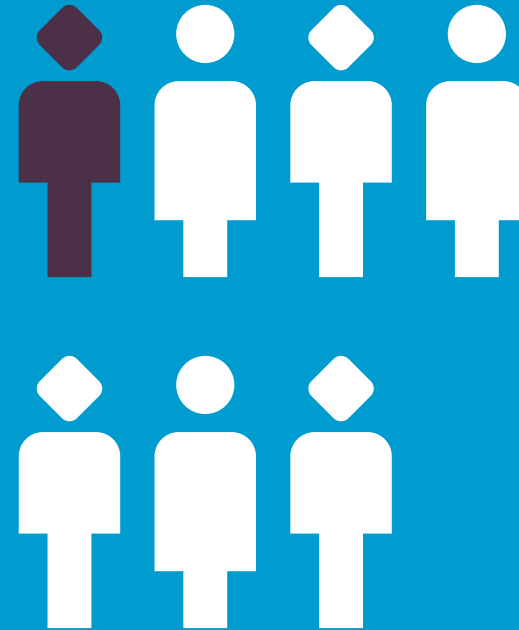


Earning the Living Wage means I can spend more time with my daughter doing the things together we enjoy. I can be the dad I want to be.

A cleaner paid the real Living Wage

1 in 7

UK employees work for an accredited Living Wage employer. That's 4.1m people in the UK.





Martin Lewis CBE

Founder of MoneySavingExpert.com



I believe the Living Wage Foundation has had a profound effect on society over the past 25 years. There are many stats you can look at such as the fact nearly half a million people in the UK are now with Living Wage accredited employers, though sadly 4.4m people still continue to be paid below a real Living Wage.

If you look at the difference between the real Living Wage and the minimum wage now compared to when this all started, the change is huge. The gap has narrowed and some of that can be attributed to the Living Wage Foundation which is a big achievement.



The only wage based on the cost of living

As part of Citizens UK, the Living Wage Foundation sits within the UK's biggest, most diverse and effective people powered alliance. By bringing together everyday people and local organisations, Citizens UK makes change on the issues that matter – from campaigning for zebra crossings on dangerous roads, to reforming the immigration system, to launching the Living Wage campaign. Today, that campaign has gained support from thousands of leading employers that have chosen to do the right thing and transform millions of people's lives through fair pay and secure hours.

We believe work should provide a decent standard of living for everyone; no-one should be in work and unable to make ends meet, now or in their future.

The cost of missing out on a real Living Wage

Every year we ask people who are paid less than the real Living Wage about the impact their wage rate has on their lives, and what getting paid a real Living Wage would change.

59%

of low-paid workers skipped meals, turned off the heating, fell behind on bills or took out a pay-day loan in the past year to cover essentials.



12%

of low-paid workers have no money left over each week or find themselves further in debt after paying for basics.



29%

of low-paid workers report that their level of pay has a negative impact on their relationships with close friends and family.



65%

of low-paid workers say that if they were paid the real Living Wage, it would improve their quality of life.



69%

of those with dependent children said that getting paid the real Living Wage would improve their relationship with their children somewhat or a lot.





Gina Rodriguez

Community leader and campaigner,
Empoderando Familias & Citizens UK

My journey with the Living Wage Campaign began in 2021, but my commitment to decent pay goes back much further. When I came to the UK 17 years ago, I worked as a cleaner, spending years on minimum wage, often unaware of my rights. I experienced hunger, poverty, and insecure work—experiences that still drive my passion for the real Living Wage and for supporting others facing the same struggles.

I was invited to join the steering group for the project to help [Make London a Living Wage City](#). As the only Latina in the room, I felt I represented the wider Latino cleaners' community, which is close to my heart.

Together, we developed long-term strategies, including targeting major cultural institutions to create a domino effect of accreditation.

Through my community group, Empoderando Familias, with Citizens UK, we campaigned to persuade iconic South Bank institutions like the Tate, Shakespeare's Globe, and the National Theatre to become Living Wage employers. These weren't easy conversations, but powerful testimonies – like my colleague Doris sharing her experience of low pay – helped influence decision-makers. It showed me how transformative our stories can be.

Knowing over 70,000 London workers have benefited from the campaign to Make London a Living Wage City makes me proud. This work has strengthened me as an advocate. I believe the next priority is growing worker centres and Living Hours accreditations – so every worker can have not just decent pay, but dignity and stability.



At times it can be equally challenging and rewarding working in health and social care, but being paid the London Living Wage and a fixed salary not only means I can plan ahead, but it also motivates me to be productive because I know my time and work is being valued by my employer.

My kids can't believe I'm at work. I go to work happy and return feeling the same. I feel like I am breaking the cycle and creating opportunities for my children to reach their potential. All because of a fair wage.

Michael Lascelles

Health and social worker, Enabled Living



I'm so pleased that we are paid a real Living Wage as it really makes a difference to our quality of life living in London. Bringing our roles in-house and being paid the Living Wage makes us feel valued and recognised for the work we do', says Anna.

Jacky adds, "We work around the clock to ensure our ambulances are in perfect condition and our crews can provide the best possible care for our communities. Being paid the Living Wage means I can enjoy the opportunities that come with living in London whilst training to be a social worker.

Anna and Jacky

London Ambulance Service





03 Business



“People say, ‘you guys are successful, therefore you can pay the Living Wage’, but they’ve got it the wrong way around – we’re successful because we pay the Living Wage.”

James Hennebry
CEO of Rosslyn Coffee

16,000+

Accredited Living Wage
employers





SSE

Championing the Living Wage movement has been a core part of SSE's sustainability agenda for more than a decade, because we know that fair pay and secure work matter to our people and our business. SSE's committed to building on that strong legacy and helping drive it forward across our workforce and supply chain.

Rhian Kelly
Chief Sustainability Officer, SSE

SSE plc is a leading UK-listed energy company that invests in, develops, builds and operates electricity infrastructure needed for a clean, secure and affordable energy system. Headquartered in Perth, Scotland, it has been a UK Living Wage accredited employer since 2013, underpinning its commitment to fair work and strengthening its position as an employer of choice.

Over the last 13 years, SSE has continued to build on this commitment. In 2014, it included a Living Wage clause in UK supplier contracts and has since updated it to reach as many workers as



possible across its diverse supply chain. In 2015, SSE became the first large corporate business in Ireland to pay a real Living Wage and will begin rolling this out to its supply chain there from 2026.

To formalise its commitment to providing secure work, SSE signed up to the Living Hours accreditation in 2021. In 2023, with the cost of living crisis making it even more important to help employees build a secure pension pot, SSE became Living Pension accredited. This provided an immediate financial benefit to 113 colleagues, averaging £215 a year per employee.

SSE was one of the first large companies to adopt all three Living Wage Foundation accreditations – committing to decent wages, hours, and pensions for its employees. It continues to work towards extending this beyond its direct workforce to its supply chain.

When businesses accredit, they benefit

Organisations commit to pay the real Living Wage because it's the right thing to do, it boosts their reputation as a good employer, and it's a way to recognise their staff's contribution to their work. The vast majority (94%) of employers tell us that they see benefits including reputational gains, improved staff recruitment and retention, and winning more contracts or attracting more customers. In this section, we hear from a range of employers about their experience of paying the real Living Wage.



KPMG

Anna Purchas

Vice Chair & London Office Senior Partner, KPMG UK and Co-chair of the 'Making London Work for All' Steering Group

Paying the Living Wage reduces in-work poverty and is a fundamental driver of social mobility, creating a more equitable society for future generations. Its impact on the working population is profound.

The Living Wage provides greater financial security, improving wellbeing and reducing stress, which extends positively to families and communities. Beyond its well-established social impact, it also delivers measurable business benefits – lower attrition and enhanced productivity, contributing to sustainable and inclusive growth. Being an accredited business

attracts great talent and customers. Our journey with the Living Wage Foundation spans back to its inception. We were a founding member of the Foundation, playing a crucial role in advocating for the Living Wage and becoming one of the first businesses in the UK accredited as a Living Wage employer. The strength of the Living Wage Foundation – then and now – lies in its ability to unite businesses, communities, and policymakers to drive change together.

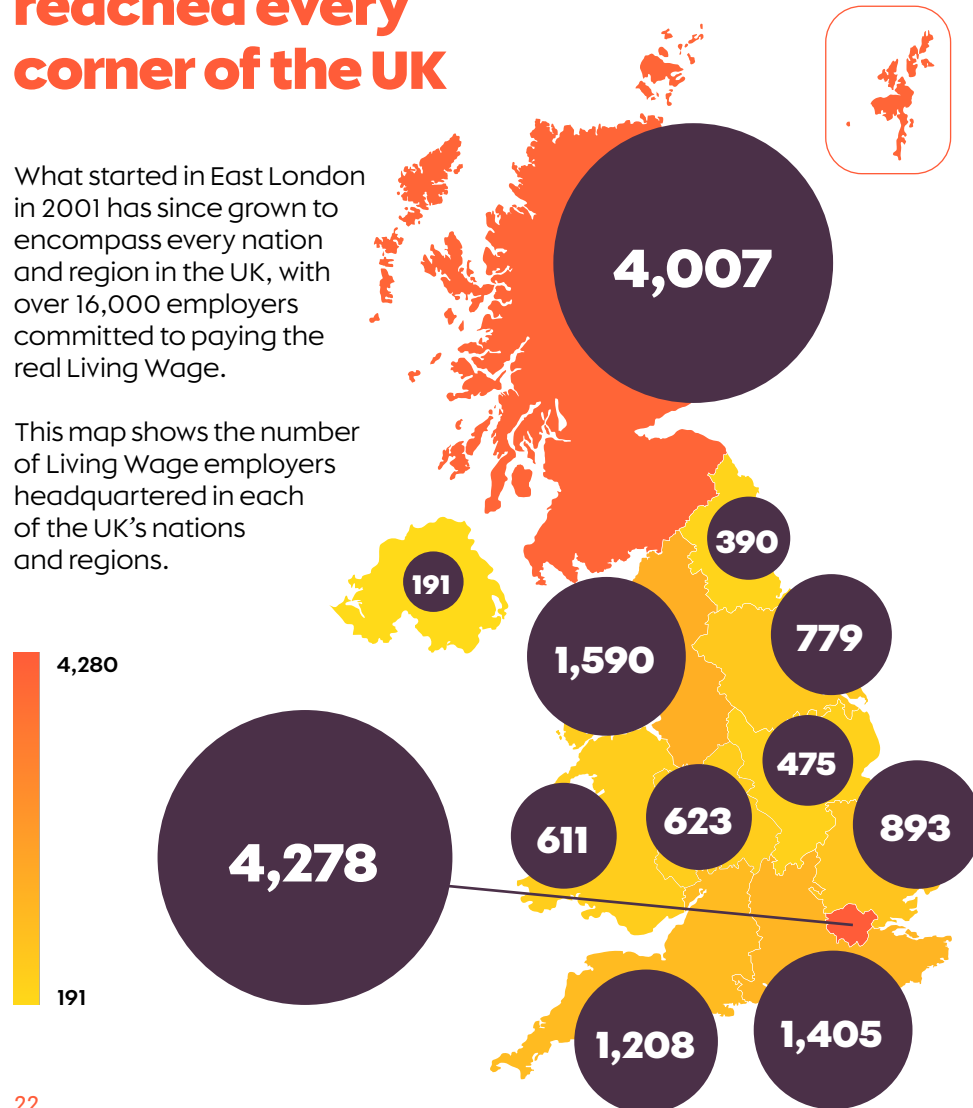
It is fantastic to be celebrating 25 years of this important movement, and I look forward to continuing our work together.



The Living Wage movement has reached every corner of the UK

What started in East London in 2001 has since grown to encompass every nation and region in the UK, with over 16,000 employers committed to paying the real Living Wage.

This map shows the number of Living Wage employers headquartered in each of the UK's nations and regions.



Living Wage Places

One of the biggest driving forces of growth in various regions has been our 17 [Living Wage Places](#) – collective groups of employers, public sector bodies, and civil society working together to grow the number of employers. Hear from two councils involved in Living Wage Places below.



Tom Stannard
CEO of Manchester
City Council



The Living Wage movement has had a significant impact in Manchester, becoming a widely recognised standard for responsible, ethical employment. Manchester City Council became accredited in 2019, raising wages for around 1,700 staff. Today there are 349 accredited employers across the city, delivering pay rises for over 9,600 people.

Through the Manchester Living Wage Places Action Group, employers across the public, private and voluntary sectors are working together to reduce in-work poverty and make Manchester a truly Living Wage city.



Councillor John Batterson
Southwark Council



Through the Living Wage employer scheme, businesses are now recognised for paying their staff fairly. This has created a strong network of businesses who pay their staff a fair wage as a matter of course.

In Southwark, we have also seen many employers sign up to pay the Living Wage, creating fairer and more equitable pay across different industries. Through the Southwark Living Wage Places work the Action Group has consistently promoted the real Living Wage, resulting in 310 new businesses accrediting over the past 6 years, moving 3,700 workers onto the London Living Wage.



COOK

COOK have been accredited for just over a decade now, proving that it's possible to make a long-term commitment to decent pay and being a responsible employer.

The impact that paying the real Living Wage has had on COOK can be best seen in our strengthened employer brand. It's allowed us to become an employer of choice, meaning we can remain competitive when recruiting for retail and manufacturing roles in local areas. In fact, paying the Living Wage has frequently been mentioned by candidates in interviews and has proved to be a particularly strong recruitment tool for younger workers.

We believe that, for retailers, paying the real Living Wage is a practical way to stand out in a highly competitive labour market. In our experience, it strengthens recruitment, signals credibility and helps retailers to differentiate themselves from others on the high street and online.



Employers continue to join the Living Wage movement, with more than 2,000 employers joining in the last year including UNIQLO and the Department for Business and Trade.

I am passionate about creating workplaces where people are treated with dignity and respect, and having been accredited as a Living Wage employer today, I am proud that my Department is just that.

I am delighted we are the trailblazer that other Government departments can follow, ensuring a fair day's pay for a fair day's work and providing the backing working people in this country deserve.

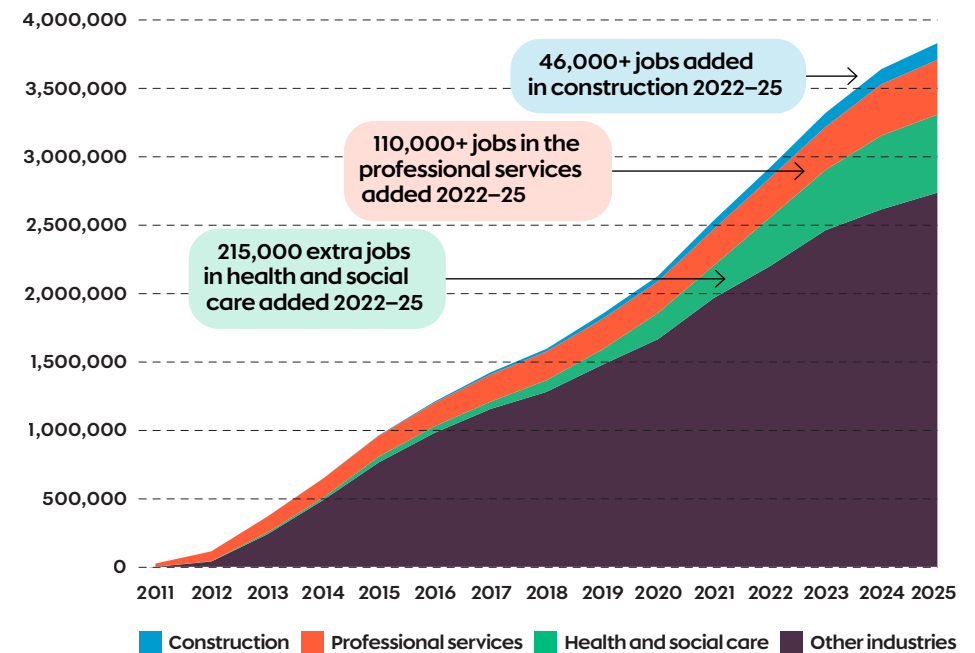
Kate Dearden
Employment Rights Minister
at the Department of Business
and Trade

The real Living Wage is paid in every industry

Today every UK industry is home to Living Wage employers. Over half a million people work for Living Wage employers in the health and social work sector, and another half a million work in core governmental functions. A number of other industries such as hospitality, professional services, and arts and culture, have seen the number of people working for Living Wage employer grow by more than 25% in the past three years.

In every industry, some people work for a Living Wage employer today.

Number of people working for Living Wage employers, by industry (SIC code).



Note: The number of people working for Living Wage employers is 4.1 million today. Some aren't represented here because of missing data about the industry.



Rosslyn Coffee

Rosslyn is an award-winning collection of coffee shops in the City of London, with 9 sites and counting. At the heart of Rosslyn's philosophy is a simple belief: success is best when shared. This commitment is reflected in their long-standing decision to pay the real Living Wage, a choice that has shaped culture, strengthened the team, and supported commercial success.

James Hennebry, CEO of Rosslyn, says paying the Living Wage is "part of who we are." To take good care of guests, Rosslyn believes it must first take good care of its team. Living Wage accreditation pays off in many ways, from attracting

talent aligned with Rosslyn's values to significantly improving retention and a motivated team who take pride in delivering consistently high standards.

Guests also really value knowing the team serving them are treated well, strengthening loyalty to the Rosslyn brand. Most importantly, team members have shared that the real Living Wage means they can "keep a stable roof over my head, not clambering paycheck to paycheck."



UNIQLO

Alessandro Dudech
UNIQLO UK COO



UNIQLO is delighted to be accredited by the Living Wage Foundation in the UK. We believe that ensuring our employees are fairly compensated for their hard work is essential for fostering a motivated and productive workforce. UNIQLO's investment in our UK team is in line with our ambitious growth plan here, enabling us to be an attractive employer of choice. We are proud to join the ranks of other responsible employers who are leading the way in promoting fair pay and improving the quality of life for their employees.

West Brom Building Society



At the end of the day, it's much more than just being an accredited employer. It's a promise to your people that you're in it for the long-haul.

Susith Jayamanne

Reward Specialist at the West Brom.

West Bromwich Building Society ("The West Brom") has been an accredited Living Wage employer since 2020, gaining Living Hours, Living Pension and Living Wage Funder accreditations since, making them one of the first organisations to achieve all four accreditations.

Doing so has had a transformative impact on West Brom Building Society's employees and culture, having strengthened financial security for employees across their working lives and into retirement. The real Living Wage was always the foundation, but as a next step the West Brom sought Living Hours accreditation to validate the practices they already had to guarantee predictable working patterns and give people the stability they need to plan their lives.

Their Living Pension accreditation completed what The West Brom calls "the whole picture" by providing security for their employees in retirement too and after just six months as a Living Pension Employer, the West Brom saw 38% of staff voluntarily move to a higher pension contribution.

The West Brom believes the collective impact of their accreditations will be strengthened employee trust, loyalty, and engagement. They believe the commitments pay for themselves through a more united workforce and improved ability to attract and retain staff in competitive periods.

More broadly, these commitments are seen as fundamental to being a responsible employer, demonstrating that putting employee financial wellbeing first, through fair pay, secure hours and a dignified retirement is good for everyone.



04 Society

In a time of deepening inequality and declining trust, the Living Wage movement offers a hopeful path forward.

Matthew Bolton
Chief Executive Citizens UK



Matthew Bolton
Chief Executive of Citizens UK

The Living Wage movement has always been about more than pay. It's about respect for those who keep our country going and a belief in the power of those people whose voices are not heard to change our society for the better.

Over the years, I've seen how our movement has profoundly shifted what's possible for low paid workers. What started back in 2001 as a bold idea from low-income communities organising in East London grew to become the most successful social movement of the century.

I often think back to my time organising with the night cleaners in Canary Wharf and the City. People like Benedita and Anthony who worked back-breaking shifts, awake at night and trying to sleep in the day, working hard to keep the offices of FTSE 100 companies clean but not paid enough to buy school shoes for their children or take the tube home so they could be back for a family breakfast. Through their courage and stories, together we were able to make the real Living Wage the norm across that sector. When we think of the

450,000+ people who have been lifted out of working poverty, this is not just a number. This is real people being able to heat their homes, no longer skipping meals, families having more time to show their love to each other.

When people act together, they become impossible to overlook. This is the spirit at the heart of the Living Wage movement: a unique alliance of faith groups, schools, unions, communities and employers choosing to make sure work pays. It's the practice of taking the world as it is and pushing it, inch by inch, toward the world as it should be.

And in a time of deepening inequality and declining trust, the Living Wage movement offers a hopeful path forward. It's a story about what becomes possible when people come together, build relationships, and insist on the dignity of work.



Mike Brewer
Deputy Chief
Economist,
Resolution
Foundation

25 years ago, around one in five workers across the UK were low paid – earning below two-thirds of the median – one of the highest rates in Europe. Today, hourly low pay has been virtually eradicated. The Living Wage campaign played a major role in this change. Firstly, by getting thousands of employers to sign up to pay the real Living Wage. But secondly by making and winning the moral argument that low pay is something that needs to be tackled. This helped persuade recent Governments to turbo-charge rises in the statutory minimum wage over the past decade, including via the introduction of the flatteringly-named National Living Wage.

Building on this progress, policy debates have moved on to wider questions of job quality, including how to tackle the insecurity faced by workers reliant on unpredictable shift work. The Living Wage campaign is again playing a leading role by creating a new good employment benchmark that addresses these issues. The Resolution Foundation is privileged to have played its part in the Living Wage campaign by setting real living wage rates based on what people need to get by.



Edmund Heery
Professor Emeritus
at Cardiff Business
School

The Living Wage has been adopted by thousands of employers and led to a substantial increase in hourly pay for many low paid workers. In addition, non-accredited employers have used it as a guide when setting their own pay levels and trade unions have included it within collective bargaining.

David Nash
Professor, Cardiff
Business School

It shows that voluntary action can deliver genuine redistribution when backed by strong campaigning, public sector leadership, and a supportive coalition of employers committed to doing the right thing.

The Living Wage movement's ripple effects

Research from Cardiff Business School shows that the Living Wage movement has strengthened other methods of tackling workers' rights issues across the UK, helping to influence the Government's own minimum wage ambitions, reflected in the 2016 rebrand of the statutory minimum as the National Living Wage.

The influence of the campaign is also apparent in the rise of a 'shadow' Living Wage movement, where unaccredited employers set their pay scale in line with the real Living Wage, including several large supermarket chains. This is another factor influencing the increasing concentration of wage distribution around the real Living Wage over time, reflected in the time series below.

The Living Wage has gone mainstream

In 2025, a representative survey UK adults revealed that 75% people now recognise the real Living Wage.

While 75% have heard of the real Living Wage – which has become a term widely used in its own right

in campaigns for decent pay, 41% of the public also shared that they either knew what a 'Living Wage employer' was or had seen the 'Living Wage employer' logo.

This level of recognition is only possible because accredited employers choose not only to pay the real Living Wage, but also to promote it wherever they can.

Three quarters of the public have heard of the real Living Wage





Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London

“The real Living Wage campaign has had a seismic impact on the world of work and on society's expectations around fair pay. As a Londoner and as Mayor, I've been proud to support the campaign to make London a Wage City. It has made a phenomenal difference to working Londoners, growing from a grassroots movement into a cornerstone of our shared vision for a fairer London.

I've always believed a hard day's work deserves a fair day's pay. Since becoming Mayor in 2016, the number of Living Wage employers has increased sevenfold to over 4,300, putting more than £1bn into the pockets of our lowest paid workers, many in essential industries and services that keep our city running. This is an incredible achievement and testament to the hard work of everyone at the Living Wage Foundation and all those who've supported its campaigning.

Most impressive is the breadth of the movement – from community

and faith organisations to employers, policymakers, trade unions and workers themselves. This coalition has held together for a quarter of a century, growing the network of Living Wage employers through immense political and societal upheaval. It is a huge accomplishment and a clear sign the campaign can continue to thrive. The first 25 years show the transformative impact a citizen-led movement with a clear mission can have. But there is more to do when one in seven London workers still don't earn a Living Wage, and too many jobs remain low paid, insecure or fail to make best use of the talent in our communities.

A real Living Wage is central to creating an inclusive economy that works for all. As Mayor, I'm committed to ensuring no Londoners are left behind and that all communities share in London's prosperity, through the London Growth Plan, Good Work Standard, the London Anchor Institutions Network and continued support for citizen-led movements like the Living Wage campaign.



Manny Hothi
Chief Executive of
Trust for London

“Is it possible to ensure everyone in London is paid at least the London Living Wage? That's the future we set out to create when we backed the campaign to make London a Living Wage City in 2021 through our largest ever grant of nearly £5 million to the Living Wage Foundation and Citizens UK. It was one of the easiest decisions we've ever taken.

The campaign doubled the number of Living Wage employers in the city, putting £330 million into the pockets of low-paid Londoners.

Behind these numbers are immeasurable improvements to everyday life: less anxiety about being able to pay the bills or take a break with family. The Living Wage movement shows that decent pay, secure work, and a fairer city is achievable. The question is not whether change is possible, but how we build the power to deliver it.



Morgan Bestwick
Policy Advisor at
JRF

“The Living Wage movement is one of the most inspiring and effective workers' rights campaigns of recent decades. Evolving from a grassroots organising movement into a national standard of good work, with 16,000 UK employers accredited, is a stellar achievement.

It's encouraging to see the movement has built on the moral foundations of a fair, living wage, through working with employers to tackle other urgent injustices – including insecure and unpredictable work and poverty in retirement which supports people's economic security in the round.



05 What's next the 25 years ahead

Work that works
for everyone

Millions of people are still in low paid or insecure work

For 25 years, the Living Wage campaign has grown from its roots among campaigners in East London to a movement of 16,000+ employers, covering over 4 million workers. It's a staggering achievement. But there's still work to do.



4.4 million

jobs in the UK are paid less than the real Living Wage. That's 2 million fewer than were in low paid jobs a decade ago, but means that many workers today are still earning less than what they need to meet the cost of living.



80%

of all employees saving into a Defined Contribution pension are not saving enough for an acceptable standard of living in retirement, rising to 95% of low paid workers. Over 50% are worried they will never be able to retire.



4.2 million

people are employees in jobs that are insecure – for instance, with volatile pay or hours of work, or in a zero hour contract. For these workers, having enough hours of work every week and decent notice of their shifts can help to make work more manageable.



How we're planning to tackle in-work and post-work poverty

Over the past 25 years, the Living Wage movement has delivered change at scale. Building on this legacy, the next chapter of the movement is about creating work that works for everyone. Alongside paying a real Living Wage, we're working with employers to provide their employees with secure hours and fair pensions, so that work supports people throughout their lives.

Living Hours



Imagine trying to plan your budget or family life when you don't know when you're going to be working or if you'll get the hours and pay you need. That's why the Living Wage Foundation launched the Living Hours accreditation: so that everyone has the secure working hours they need to thrive.

Today, nearly 300 Living Hours employers including SSE, Aviva, Aberdeen, SpareRoom, and Wealthify are challenging the UK's culture of precarious employment

▀ **Living Hours is such a crucial follow-up to Living Wage. It gives people the stability they need to plan their lives, pay their bills, and breathe a little easier.**

Susith Jayamanne, Reward Specialist at the West Brom

Living Hours sees employers commit to providing at least 4 weeks' notice for every shift, with guaranteed payment if shifts are cancelled within this notice period. Employers also provide a guaranteed minimum of 16 working hours every week and a contract that accurately reflects hours worked.

Living Pension



Building on the success of the real Living Wage, the Living Pension accreditation sets an annual pensions savings target that employers can have confidence in, making it easier to do the right thing by their employees and provide workers with financial security now and in the future.

With 4 in 5 employees not saving enough to meet their basic needs in retirement, over 100 leading Living Pension Employers, including SSE, Everton, and Natwest are doing their bit to address the ticking timebomb of pensioner poverty.

By committing to provide a Living Pension, accredited employers are voluntarily going beyond the legal minimum to boost pension savings for their staff, making contributions designed to keep workers out of poverty in later life.

▀ **We believe that Living Pension will help us retain our staff, and as the first Living Pension cleaning company we really stand out in the sector.**

Clean for Good

Global Living Wage



Paying a real Living Wage is one of the most powerful ways employers can reduce inequality, strengthen communities, advance the Sustainable Development Goals and mitigate human rights risks.

We work with in-country movements to develop and grow Living Wage initiatives worldwide. We create spaces for organisations to connect, share expertise and

collaborate through our Global Living Wage Network and wider partnerships. We work with a growing number of recognised Affiliates who accredit businesses in different countries. These trusted organisations from around the world set and champion Living Wages in their own countries, based on the real local cost of living.

With businesses like ISS World, SSE, and Linklaters we have helped strengthen global consensus on robust living wage data and increased buy-in for collective action at the UN Leaders Summit and the UN Forum on Business & Human Rights.

Get started:

- ✿ Accredit with our [Affiliates](#) in the US and New Zealand
- ✿ Collaborate and support [in-country Living Wage work](#)
- ✿ Find out about Living Wage rates globally with [WageMap](#)
- ✿ Join the global conversation on Living Wages, sign up to the [UN Global Compact Forward Faster](#) initiative

Together, we can end in-work poverty.



01. Celebrate your role in our movement

Whether you're a part of the Living Wage employer movement, or you've helped move things forward in other ways, celebrate your involvement in one of the most successful social movements of the century, and use our social media materials to inspire others to follow your example.



02. Continue to talk about the importance of paying a real Living Wage

Why not spark up a conversation about the importance of a real Living Wage at your next meeting, event or online that raises

01 Introduction

02 People

03 Business

04 Society

05 What's next



How to play your part

awareness of why the real Living Wage matters for workers and communities? Use content in this report to help you make a case.



03. Reach out to your industry or sector peers to join our employer movement

Connect with some of your industry or regional peers and encourage them to become accredited Living Wage employers. You can put them in touch with the Living Wage Foundation team who are happy to support their accreditation journey and answer any FAQs.



04. Extend your commitment to good work and become a Living Hours or Living Pension Employer

Take the next step to supporting your employees and explore [Living Hours](#) and [Living Pension](#) accreditation, to provide your employees with security and stability now and in the future.



05. Become a Principal Partner

Investment builds impact and comes with tangible returns. With your strategic insight and funding support, we will continue to make progress in the right areas based on the strongest evidence and collaborative effort possible.



Not part of the movement yet?

Join thousands of UK Employers leading the way on decent pay and become an accredited real Living Wage Employer.

Find out more at: livingwage.org.uk/accredit

This report was supported by our lead sponsor Herbert Smith Freehills Kramer, and our supporting sponsor SSE.



Principal Partners:



Linklaters



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