Toolkit: Accrediting your church as a Living Wage Employer

Doesn't every employer pay the Living Wage by default?

No! While the "National Living Wage" is the **legal minimum** set by government, the *real* Living Wage is the only wage rate based solely on the cost of living. It's a **voluntary standard** employers choose to pay to ensure their staff can meet their everyday needs. The real Living Wage, calculated each year by the Resolution Foundation, is consequently **higher** that the National Living Wage, as it keeps pace with living costs.

Why would our church choose to pay the real Living Wage?

In London today, it is not possible to thrive on the National Living Wage – as shown by the clear discrepancy with the real Living Wage. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation in their 2026 report summarised it in this way; work does not guarantee security; around two-thirds of working-age adults are in poverty, that is 5.4 million people.

It makes sense that, as churches following the Five Marks of Mission, "*respond to human need by loving service*" through ministries such as community meals, social supermarkets and food banks, we should also seek to "*transform unjust structures of society*" by paying the wage needed to keep people from needing emergency food aid in the first place.

Our church already pays the Living Wage – why would we accredit?

If your church already pays the Real Living Wage, accreditation is a simple way to make that commitment visible and lasting.

- **Publicly demonstrates your commitment to economic justice** and solidarity with low-paid workers.
- **Showcases your church's values**, with a Living Wage Employer plaque visible to staff, visitors and the wider community.
- **Encourages reflection and discipleship**, helping congregations think about fair pay and tackling poverty.
- **Protects the commitment for the future**, ensuring it continues through financial pressures and leadership changes.
- **Supports a wider diocesan movement** to help lower-paid workers live well in London.

Rather than keeping this commitment behind the scenes, accreditation allows your PCC and church to witness publicly to its values and encourage others to do the same.



What steps do we need to take to accredit?

For small organisations like churches, accrediting is a straight-forward process, which will typically be completed in less than a month. The initial enquiry form consists of **nine simple questions**, which will take no more than five minutes to answer.

Once the Foundation has received your form, you will then be expected to:

1. Confirm that directly employed staff are being paid the current Living Wage rates;
2. Have a plan in place to extend the living wage to include any third-party staff;
3. Complete a Licence Agreement, which sets out your commitments as a Living Wage employer.

Prior to signing the agreement, you will want to consult your PCC. Put accreditation on their agenda and ask them to vote on becoming a Living Wage Employer, confirming they are happy with terms of the Licence Agreement and content to pay the annual accreditation fee.

This license, signed by you and the Foundation, represents the accreditation itself. Once signed and submitted, you will receive a confirmation email from the Foundation, as well as logos and materials to promote and celebrate your accreditation status. The church will also appear on the Foundation website's list and map of Living Wage Employers.

What are the costs and commitments associated with accrediting?

Firstly: The real Living Wage is calculated each year, in November, by the Resolution Foundation, based on actual living costs. As an accredited employer, you are committing to pay the up-to-date Living Wage rate on an ongoing basis.

Secondly: You will be asked to pay a fee to gain and maintain your accreditation status. This starts at £69 p.a. for organisations with fewer than 10 employees, more details can be found on the Living Foundation website.

Will we be able to accredit if we employ contractors?

In order to accredit, you must have an agreed plan in place to bring third party contracted staff (such as catering, cleaning, or security staff) onto the real Living Wage.

The Living Wage Foundation can provide advice and support for approaching contractors, in addition to what is already laid out in their FAQ. While this element of accrediting may require more time and thought, it is possible to work constructively with contractors – as diocesan churches have already experienced.

Need further help?

Do get in touch with the Compassionate Communities Team if you'd like to speak to a church that has been through it for a conversation.

For more information, including theological reflections, resources and videos on the Living Wage, please see the Living Wage Page on the Diocese of London Website.