



Assessing the impact of the Living Wage in Oxford

Oxford Food Poverty Alliance: Interim report
November 2018

Wages, well-being and productivity

We have carried out research to assess the impact of the Living Wage on well-being and productivity in Oxford's workplaces. This included 25 semi-structured interviews of employees and employers from accredited Living Wage employers in Oxford. Our key research findings are as follows:

- Many people in part-time roles (due to caring or studying responsibilities) are financially insecure and experiencing some level of food poverty, e.g. skipping meals, poor diet.
- When working part-time, the Living Wage cannot sustain a good standard of living.
- Those in a better position often had some form of subsidised housing (e.g. living with family, council house).
- Wage is not the only factor to consider. Employees really valued staff benefits such as free meals and subsidised travel expenses, which made a big difference to their quality of life.
- Many employers agreed that the Real Living Wage was not enough, but many could not afford to pay staff the Oxford Living Wage.

Challenges and learning

- Recruiting employees to take part in the interviews was challenging, so a small incentive was used (hot drinks voucher) to encourage participation.
- The number of accredited employers in the food service sector was extremely limited. While this was not the main focus of the study, interviewing more staff in these jobs would have been interesting.
- It was difficult to specifically target a diverse group of respondent due to the nature of the sample selection (employees within a specific wage group) so the selection of interviewees was largely in the hands of the participating employers. However, the demographics were largely reflective of Oxford.



“Many people in part-time roles (due to caring or studying responsibilities) are financially insecure in Oxford, with many experiencing some basic level of food poverty (skipping meals, poor diet).”

Next steps

At this stage there has been no direct benefit to local people with experience of, or at risk of, food poverty. This is because so far, no new employers have agreed to pay the Real Living Wage. We hope to use this research, working alongside Oxford City Council, as a springboard to campaigning for more take up of the Real Living Wage and the Oxford Living Wage. We also hope this research, which clearly shows the link between a Real Living Wage and food access, will develop the conversation and understanding around the importance of both with employers.

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www.foodpower.org.uk

