

# Briefing on ...

# Living Wage Campaign

## A Scottish Living Wage

### Introduction

On May 5<sup>th</sup> 2009, the Scottish Living Wage Campaign (SLWC) announced a Living Wage for Scotland. Following extensive research, and drawing on the experiences of the London Living

Wage Campaign and the findings of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, it has been agreed that the wage should be set at £7 per hour.

This briefing outlines the campaign and UNISON's involvement to date.

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### Context

Low pay remains a very real problem for hundreds of thousands of workers across Scotland. The national minimum wage has helped outlaw blatant exploitation and the tax credit system has helped boost the pay of thousands of low paid workers. But despite this, the Scottish Low Pay Unit estimates that over 350,000 full time workers are low paid. The existence of so many low paid jobs traps individuals and families in poverty, denying the opportunities and choices that should be for everyone in a country as wealthy as Scotland.

In response to the problem of low pay, a number of living wage campaigns have developed across the UK supported by UNISON. Rather than demanding further changes in the law, these campaigns have brought demands for a 'living wage' directly to employers (both in the public and private sector). Real changes have been won, particularly in London, and have drawn strength from the involvement of low paid workers, grassroots anti-poverty activists, trade unionists, faith based groups, voluntary organisations, migrants groups and students.

### The Scottish Living Wage Campaign

The SLWC is supported by a range of community, trade union and campaigning organisations including the Scottish Trade Union Congress (STUC), the Poverty Alliance, the Scottish Churches Social Inclusion Network and the Scottish Interfaith Council. Its first success was achieved with the announcement by Glasgow City Council that it would

pay at least the Living Wage to all its employees.

Since the establishment of the SLWC, UNISON Scotland has been represented in the campaign and has provided expertise from our work in London. We have also campaigned politically for the adoption of the campaign objectives with political parties and the Scottish Government.

### Getting involved in the Campaign

To be successful we need a campaign that is large, active and diverse. It should include community groups, trade unionists, faith groups, and voluntary organisations. Membership of the campaign will be

open to any organisation that supports the principle and level of the living wage that is agreed. The Poverty Alliance will provide administrative and logistical support, at the very least in the initial stages of the campaign.

### **Campaign Goals**

Beyond the immediate and necessary goal of building support amongst a broad range of organisations for the living wage campaign, it is necessary to identify areas where the campaign could begin to make some early success. Organisations may wish to identify a

range of local employers, one particular employer, or employers in a given sector which is not currently paying a living wage as a focus for the campaign. Campaigns may also wish to highlight good practice and welcome improvements delivered by given employers.

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### **Access to funds to begin a Living Wage Campaign in your area/ sector**

The STUC has provided start-up support for the formation of a Living Wage Campaign in your local area or sector through the Scottish 'One Fund For All' (SOFFA). SOFFA has agreed to encourage the participation of Trades Union Councils, trade unions and community organisations in organising such campaigns. SOFFA is encouraging applications for sums no greater than £2000 to fund initial activities campaigning activities. The normal rules in relation to SOFFA grants apply but in addition organisations will be asked to:

- Indicate that they subscribe to the aims of the Living Wage Campaign.
- Agree to highlight the importance of other barriers to fair employment such as equality issues (especially gender pay discrimination) and other workplace terms and conditions.
- Provide a campaign plan identifying key aims and methods.
- Identify ways in which it aims to maximise the participation from a broad range of community groups organisations and indicate in particular a commitment to the involvement of local trade unions.
- Identify whether applicant organisations have any funds which they are able to commit to their campaign.

Applications may be supported by a range of local or sectoral organisations but a lead organisation should be identified. Examples of activities for which grant might be used include: room hire, meeting costs and campaign materials but not salary costs or capital equipment.

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### **UNISON Project - Glasgow Commonwealth Games 2014**

Over the last 12 months whilst being involved in the SLWC UNISON has focussed on establishing community links within the East End of Glasgow with the view to establishing Glasgow Commonwealth Games 2014 as a living wage games. This mirrors UNISON's UK role in supporting the London Olympic Living Wage Campaign. This trade union / community partnership has begun initially with representatives and youth groups in the Dalmarnock area and resulted in the SLWC launch using the community of Dalmarnock as an example. UNISON Scotland was responsible for the production of a film which explored young people in Dalmarnock's experience of low pay which was premiered at the Launch. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eKmyGfLHUeo>

The current plan is to access the SOFFA fund to initially conduct a joint community / UNISON member's survey in the East End of Glasgow to establish legacy demands. These demands would be explored at a joint UNISON / community conference, where the London Living Wage Campaign and London Citizens would be invited to share their experience. This may then lead to a longer term project to secure the Scottish Living Wage for everyone involved in the games and their legacy.

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### **Action for Branches**

Branches are encouraged to support the campaign through the local initiatives that develop in different parts of Scotland. For more details: <http://www.povertyalliance.org.uk/campaigns>