



THE ARCHBISHOP  
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Archbishop Stephen writes in today's *Yorkshire Post* following the new rates for the Living Wage, announced this week

Fighting poverty can feel overwhelming when we think about how many people are affected and the scale of the crisis. I hear stories of children going to school hungry, workers living paycheck-to-paycheck, and social security often failing to cover basic needs.

But these stories are not the only ones we must tell. Profound challenges require collective action to find lasting solutions. That's why it's inspiring to see communities come together to make a difference. And I draw hope from the stories of those trying to make our country fairer for everyone.

Another story we must tell is about the Living Wage campaign, which stands for a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. It began in 2001, when community members, including church leaders, gathered to discuss how to address poverty. They were frustrated by seeing friends and family work multiple jobs but still struggle to make ends meet. Their efforts led to a march in East London, calling on employers—including the big banks at nearby Canary Wharf—to take action, and the Living Wage campaign was born.

Fast forward to 2024, and the campaign has grown significantly. Today, over 15,000 employers, including more than half of the FTSE 100 companies, commit to paying their workers a real living wage. Some of these businesses, along with charities, faith groups, and politicians, are now also offering better working hours and pension plans, giving workers more financial security and control over their lives.

This week marks a milestone for the Living Wage campaign. The [Living Wage Foundation](#) has raised the hourly rate that workers need to meet the cost of living, increasing from £12 to £12.60 UK wide and £13.85 in London, a rise of 5.3%. This increase will put more money in the pockets of the lowest-paid workers, helping them support their families.

The Foundation also announced a record number of workers benefiting from this increase—nearly half a million people nationwide. This includes staff at Yorkshire-based companies like Persimmon Homes, Leeds Building Society, and Bluebird Bakery, who voluntarily set their pay above the legal minimum wage. Thanks to these employers, more people will see a well-deserved pay rise, with the campaign putting nearly £3.5 billion into the hands of low-wage workers.

There are also inspiring local stories to tell. Here in York, the [Hungry Minds](#) appeal is also making a difference. This initiative aims to end classroom hunger by providing free, healthy breakfasts and lunches to primary school children. With the support of schools, businesses, charities, faith groups, the City of York council, and public donations, two schools have already benefited. Expanding this programme across York will require more funding, but the groundwork is in place to make a lasting change for children.

While the government plays a critical role in addressing poverty, campaigns like the Living Wage and free school meals help push for positive

change. Jesus taught that tackling poverty isn't just about charity but also about challenging systems that keep people in hardship. Proverbs 14:31 reminds us, "Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honours God." Fighting poverty isn't just about raising living standards; it's about recognising the dignity and value of every person.

The increase in the living wage is good news, but there's more work to be done. Many still earn below a real living wage, struggle to feed their families, or lack a proper pension for retirement. We must continue pushing for a world without poverty, encouraging the government to take action, and telling stories which prove change can be made. When we do that together, the task of addressing poverty suddenly feels a little less overwhelming.

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