

The UK Living Wage Campaign: Experiences of Employers, Workers, and Advocates

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

This thesis examines the impact on the UK employment landscape of the UK Living Wage campaign, and the campaign's role as an industrial relations actor within Britain. The project's focus ranges from a national exploration of how higher wages and improved working conditions are fought for in the twenty-first century, to the organisational impact of the adoption of the Living Wage for employers, to the impact that being paid the Living Wage has on the professional and personal lives of the workers that receive them. Through 85 semi-structured, in-depth qualitative interviews with campaigners, Living Wage Employers, workers, and leaders and advocates of the wider Living Wage movement, this thesis contributes to the existing literature base through its identification of a number of key insights at separate levels of the campaign. These include an exploration of the personal motivations of decisionmakers within firms that voluntarily decide to adopt the Living Wage; the wider impact of these decisions on an organisation, and their workers; and the evolution of the UK Living Wage campaign itself. When taken together, these insights help to explain the existence, facilitation, and impact of the campaign on the British employment landscape, and on the campaign's wider role as an industrial relations actor. This thesis argues that the UK Living Wage movement demonstrates a significant evolution of how higher pay and improved working conditions are campaigned for and regulated across the UK labour market and industrial relations landscape, as the role of traditional trade unions continues to be challenged through the growing involvement of civil society organisations, as well as illustrating the changing norms of what constitutes corporate social responsibility in the twenty-first century.

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List of abbreviations

LW	Living Wage
LLW	London Living Wage
RLW	Real Living Wage
NLW	National Living Wage
LWF	Living Wage Foundation
LWW	Living Wage Week
CUK	Citizens UK
LWS	Living Wage Scotland
SPA	Scottish Poverty Alliance
CRSP	Centre for Research and Social Policy (Loughborough)
LC	London Citizens
TELCO	The East London Communities Organisation
BUILD	Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development
NMW	National Minimum Wage

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“A living wage is that which is sufficient to enable those who receive it and those dependent on them to lead vigorous, full human lives.”

C. C. Cotterill, 1912

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Overview of thesis

This thesis presents a multi-level, multi-actor analysis of the impact of the UK Living Wage campaign on the employment landscape of Britain, exploring the organisational impacts of an employer’s adoption of the Living Wage; the impact on their workers; and the role of the Living Wage campaign as a civil society actor operating within a changing industrial relations landscape.

The motivation for the focus of this thesis emerged in the desire to conduct a study which drew the disparate branches of what constitutes “the UK Living Wage” into one coherent analysis, exploring the impact of the emergence of the Living Wage movement from the micro level of how individual workers paid the Living Wage are affected, to the meso level of the impact on not both employers as well as their wider subcontracted employment and supply chain networks, and finally to the macro level of what the role of the Living Wage campaign is and represents as a labour market actor on the national stage. The perspectives of workers themselves are significantly underrepresented in the existing Living Wage literature, so it was crucial to include an extensive focus on how the individuals that are the end users of Living Wage campaigning efforts experience and process being paid such rates of pay, and the almost-always voluntary basis on which their employer is paying them.

An extensive, in-depth exploration of the decision-making processes and internal power dynamics which culminate in the ultimate decision of individual employers to adopt the Living Wage was also a key impetus for this study. While existing literature within the field includes a wide-ranging examination of the motivations for organisations in becoming officially accredited “Living Wage Employers” (Coulson and Bonner, 2015; Heery, Nash, and Hann, 2017), as well as an in-depth exploration of a series of the disparate individual campaigns advocating for employers to pay the measure (Lopes and Hall, 2015; Prowse and Fells, 2015; Prowse, Lopes

and Fells, 2017), a significant gap exists in exploring through a case study approach the perspectives and experiences of the key actors within organisations and their reasoning for supporting (or not) their employer's decision to adopt the Living Wage, and both the personal and logistical organisational processes through which they made these decisions. A similar such gap exists with regards to the in-depth exploration of the organisational impact of adoption on individual employers, with very few studies focusing on this within their own inquiries into the Living Wage (Wills, 2009; Werner and Lim, 2016).

Equally, while the ongoing development and evolution of the Living Wage campaign has been a key focus of scholars within the field with regards to the earlier years of its emergence, particularly in the campaign's interactions with traditional actors within the industrial relations landscape (Wills et al, 2009; Holgate, 2015; Lopes, 2015), there has been far less written about and empirical research undertaken concerning the more recent developments of the movement. This is particularly true of the specific work that the Living Wage Foundation do, beyond promoting and maintaining a civil regulatory framework to provide oversight of Living Wage efforts within the UK (Williams, 2011), and the ways in which the Foundation has in recent years entered a period of transition as it seeks to take a more expansive look at the root causes of in-work poverty within Britain besides low hourly rates of pay. This is another gap in the existing literature, which this study seeks to contribute in filling.

This thesis builds on and is inspired by the many extraordinary scholars within this field of literature. While the Living Wage movement has only been in existence for less than two decades, as an area of academic inquiry it has inspired an exceptional level of high-quality research outputs. This includes the work of Wills (2001; 2004; 2009; 2013), who set the tone for the field with her peerless documentation and mapping of the emerging Living Wage landscape across the first decade of the twenty-first century, and beyond; of Holgate (2009; 2015), who explored the implications of the emergence of the Living Wage movement as a transition point for both civil society actors within the industrial relations landscape, and a challenge to the established models of traditional trade unions; and of Williams and Heery (2011; 2014), who have transitioned the latter years of discussion within the literature to a focus on the movement as a successful demonstrate of the role that civil regulatory frameworks can play in providing oversight of crucial areas of the labour market, when the structures for effective legal regulation

of standards within these areas do not exist (or are not adequately enforced). The work of these scholars has laid the foundations for this thesis, and helped to inform its focus and direction at every step.

1.2. Research Questions

This thesis is focused on exploring four key research questions:

1. Why do employers decide to adopt the Living Wage?
2. What are the organisational impacts of implementation of the Living Wage?
3. What impact does adoption of the Living Wage have on low-paid workers?
4. What is the role of the UK Living Wage campaign within a changing employment and industrial relations landscape?

Through the conducting of empirical research with a wide range of actors within the parameters of these questions, a series of findings have been discovered and analysed, many of which were unexpected and unanticipated at the beginning of this project. These include the various means and ways by which individual decisionmakers within firms view the Living Wage, and decide to support its adoption for their own organisation; the underreported, and extremely significant, ripple effects that implementation of the Living Wage can have on the subcontracted employment structures of an employer, and the employment relations impacts that this can have on non-Living Wage employers throughout their supply chain networks; the vital importance to workers of guaranteed hours of work, as well as the raising of hourly rates of pay; and the successful transition throughout the timeline of this project of the Living Wage Foundation from a single-issue campaign to an actor advocating the elimination of the wider root causes of in-work poverty within Britain, most specifically through the civil regulation of precarious forms of employment alongside wage rates themselves.

Each of these findings are explored extensively within chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 of this thesis, following the contextualisation of these areas of analysis and grounding them in the existing Living Wage literature in chapters 2 and 3. The implications and significance of these findings

are then brought together and discussed in tandem in chapter 9, alongside some concluding thoughts on the implications of this project's findings.

1.3.Thesis structure

The remainder of this thesis is structured in the following ways.

Chapter 2 provides the contextual landscape for a study of the UK Living Wage campaign. The first half of the chapter explores the development of in-work poverty within Britain over the past three decades, which culminated in the Citizens UK campaign itself being launched, and how in-work poverty has developed and evolved in the time period from the beginning of the Living Wage campaign in 2001 to the time of writing. This is followed by a discussion of the roles that an increasingly weaker social security support system, developments in employment practices (particularly the emergence of the gig economy), and weaknesses in the effective regulation of work have each played in empowering the conditions that create and sustain in-work poverty across Britain.

The second half of the chapter contextualises the wider employment and industrial relations landscape that the UK Living Wage movement operates within, exploring among other issues the changing norms and parameters of what constitutes “corporate social responsibility” in the twenty-first century; the emergence of an increasing number of other influential civil society organisations and actors which promote the voluntary adoption of “decent work” standards, including payment of the Living Wage, through formal and publicly-facing accreditation models; the role of individual state actors and traditional trade unions in interacting with the campaign, whether in support of or in opposition to it; and the role of subcontracted employment and supply chain networks in exacerbating both the incidence of low wages, and the creation of two-tiered workforces which lead to different sets of workers being paid different rates of pay for the same role (Boeri, 2015; Grimshaw et al, 2017).

Chapter 3 presents a review of the literature relating to the UK Living Wage movement. The chapter begins with a discussion and analysis of the key literature focused on exploring the field through the framework of this study's research questions, including the consequences that the campaign's emergence has had on the industrial relations and UK labour market landscape; employer motivations for adoption of the Living Wage, and formal accreditation as a “Living

Wage Employer” with the Living Wage Foundation itself; the organisational ramifications of a firm deciding to accredit; and the increasingly influential role of civil society organisations in campaigning for higher wages and better working conditions for low-paid workers within Britain.

Chapter 4 focuses on outlining the methodology and research methods of the thesis. The philosophical assumptions which underpin the study are outlined, along with a discussion of the project’s theoretical framework. The construction of the study’s fieldwork practices and data collection strategies are then discussed, along with the practical experience of conducting the research itself, before the rationale for analysis of the qualitative interview data is outlined. Ethical considerations, access, limitations of the study, fieldwork reflections through the inclusion of fieldwork research diaries, and the trustworthiness of the data itself are also all discussed and considered.

Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 are devoted to presenting the empirical findings of the study’s data collection efforts. The findings are organised into separate chapters based on distinct levels of analysis, ranging from the perspectives of individual employers, to the leaders and facilitators of the Living Wage movement itself.

Chapter 5 is focused on the varying perspectives and motivations of employers in their decisions to voluntarily adopt the Living Wage, and the individual actors within these organisations involved in making these decisions. Their initial awareness of the movement is explored, and the internal power dynamics of how and why each employer made the decision to pay the Living Wage is analysed, along with what role external actors can play in influencing these decisions in certain circumstances. Evidence of both a clear moral and business case for the adoption of the Living Wage by each organisation is presented, alongside evidence of how some firms are constructing their core business practices specifically around their decision to become a Living Wage Employer.

Chapter 6 examines the organisational impact of the Living Wage, when adopted by individual employers. This includes the internal impacts on the workplace and workforce itself, such as tensions around wage differentials, and wider external impacts, such as the reputational benefits that employers can enjoy post-accreditation. There is a particular emphasis on the ripple effect that can result from an employer accrediting on their subcontracted employment practices and

supply chain partners, and how the Living Wage Foundation's accreditation guidelines on subcontracted workers being entitled to payment of the Living Wage can lead to a wider raising of pay rates for more workers than may have initially been expected.

Chapter 7 is focused on exploring the perspectives of workers themselves on being paid the Living Wage, and whether it has influenced their attitudes towards their work and their employers, as well as how it has affected them on a personal level. A range of interrelated discussions are also analysed and extrapolated upon, including the wider parameters from the perspectives of workers as to what constitutes decent work, and a productive and enjoyable working environment beyond the uprating of hourly rates of pay; the challenges and opportunities that workers perceive in extending the Living Wage across the labour market in more concerted ways; and the central importance of guaranteed hours of work during a typical working week, in order to provide workers with a stronger bedrock of financial security that cannot be solved only by the raising of wages.

Chapter 8 focuses on the role of the UK Living Wage campaign as an actor within the industrial relations arena. It explores the internal power dynamics at play between the community coalition-focused approach of Citizens UK, and the more business-friendly Living Wage Foundation, and analyses the strengths and challenges of this "carrot and stick" strategy in persuading employers to voluntarily adopt the Living Wage. It discusses a number of key developments and projects within the Living Wage Foundation that point to the likely future direction of the campaign as a whole, most importantly the expansion of the Foundation's focus to incorporate the wider "decent work" agenda, and whether a more equal marriage between its community-based origins and employer-friendly present can be achieved. The chapter argues that civil society organisations have a considerable role to play as actors fighting for higher wages and stronger working conditions in Britain in the twenty-first century, and that the Living Wage movement is a prime example of how this can be achieved in a successful manner.

Chapter 9 brings together the findings from each of the previous four chapters and discusses the implications of these insights for both the future of the UK Living Wage campaign itself, as well as how low-paid workers are represented and their interests fought for in Britain today more widely. The limitations of this project, and recommendations for further key areas of study, are then discussed and proposed. The thesis concludes with some final thoughts on the future role of

the UK Living Wage campaign, and the part that it can play in demonstrating the value of decent pay rates and working conditions in an ever-changing work and employment landscape.

Chapter 2: A changing landscape: contextualising the UK Living Wage campaign

This chapter sets out the wider contextual landscape for this study of the UK Living Wage movement, framing both its own emergence, evolution, and the considerable impact that the campaign has had within the wider political and socioeconomic ecosystem in which it operates. The chapter begins with an examination of the growing prevalence of in-work poverty within Britain, an understanding of which is central to explaining both how and why the Citizens UK Living Wage campaign first emerged, as well as how in-work poverty and the causes of in-work poverty has evolved from the beginning of the campaign in 2001 to the present day. The wider causes of in-work poverty are then examined, most specifically the development of new forms of insecure and precarious standards of employment in recent years (particularly the role of subcontracted employment and supply chain networks in exacerbating both low wages), and the continued existence and prevalence of two-tiered workforces within the UK labour market, with different sets of workers being paid different rates of pay for the same role (Martin and Peterson, 1987; Heetderks and Martin, 1991; Boeri, 2015; Grimshaw et al, 2017).

The second half of the chapter contextualises the wider employment and industrial relations landscape that the UK Living Wage movement operates within, exploring among other issues the regulatory oversights of the state which have led to the emergence of the Living Wage campaign, and the continued development of a wider “decent work” agenda; the changing nature of trade unions in response to these changes to the employment landscape; and the rise of an increasing number of other influential civil society organisations and actors which promote the voluntary adoption of “decent work” standards, including payment of the Living Wage, through formal and publicly-facing accreditation models and public living wage campaigns. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the changing norms and parameters of what constitutes “corporate social responsibility” in the twenty-first century, amidst the wider failures of state actors to provide effective legal oversight over decent wages and working conditions across the UK labour market.

2.1. Development of in-work poverty

Understanding what is meant by “in-work poverty,” and why it has evolved into such an endemic issue across Britain in the twenty-first century, is an essential aspect of understanding both why the Citizens UK campaign for the Living Wage first began, and why it is still active (and continuing to grow in size and scope) almost two decades later.

In-work poverty is most easily defined as “when a working household’s total net income is insufficient to meet their needs” (Hick and Lanau, 2018), or, more briefly, when paid employment does not provide the means to protect a worker and/or the rest of their household from the effects of material poverty. The Office for National Statistics defines in-work poverty, or “income poverty” in their own phrase, in a more technical sense:

Income poverty is defined as living in a household with an equivalised disposable income below 60% of the national median. Equivalised disposable income is the amount of money that households have available for spending and saving after direct taxes (such as income tax and council tax) have been accounted for, adjusted for household size and composition.

(Office for National Statistics, 2015)

Given the wider arguments of this thesis, and for the sake of being forthright, it is important to note from the outset that low hourly rates of pay are not the only factor that influence in-work poverty (Bennett, 2014), with many of the other factors that influence it discussed in greater detail both within this chapter and elsewhere within this thesis (particularly chapters 3 and 7).

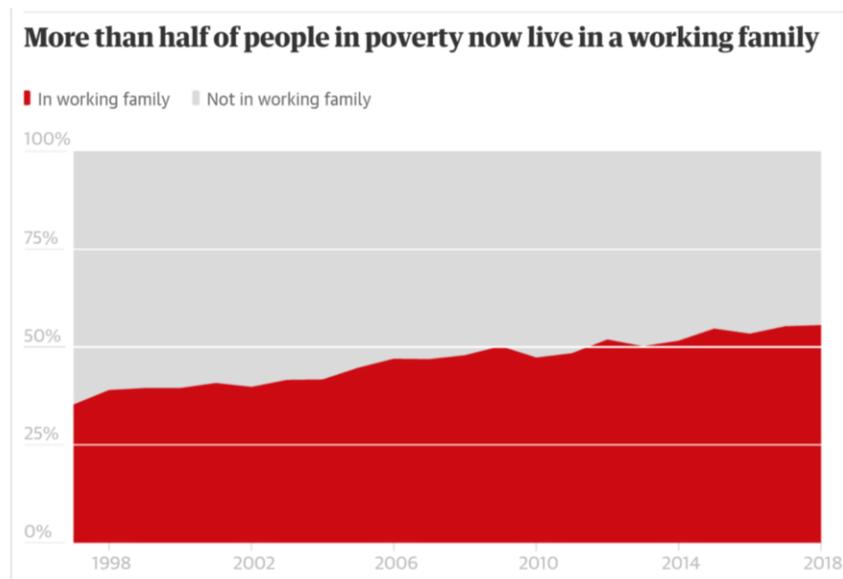
While the prevalence of in-work poverty at the turn of the millennium contributed to the beginning of the Living Wage campaign in 2001, in-work poverty has risen dramatically in the nineteen years since then that the campaign has been in operation for. In 2013, a historic shift took place within the UK labour market, with the number of people in poverty despite being in work overtaking out-of-work poverty for the first time (Department of Work and Pensions, 2013).

By 2017, a couple both working full-time and receiving legal minimum wage rates of pay would only have the income to generate 87 per cent of the basic costs of bringing up a child (Child

Poverty Action Group, 2017): by 2019, this gap between income and necessary costs had risen to 81 per cent (Child Poverty Action Group, 2019).

Additionally, while 39 per cent of people in poverty were in employment in 2001, by 2019 this had risen to 56 per cent (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2020). It is estimated that 12.7 per cent of workers are now locked in poverty due to the low-paying nature of the jobs that they perform and, for some, the unpaid caring responsibilities that they also have, compared to 9.9 per cent in 1998 (ibid). In February 2020, even before the dramatic impact on the world of work and the socioeconomic landscape of the global pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus, the most recent figures available showed that the proportion of people living in poverty who are part of a working family has hit a record high, with seven in ten children in Britain in poverty now part of a working family (Inman, 2020, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2020):

Figure 1 In-Work Poverty 1998 - 2018



Source: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2020

While new statistics are not yet available, it seems almost inevitable that the fallout on the UK labour market of the COVID-19 pandemic will raise in-work poverty to even higher levels, without considerable policy changes by the UK government. As argued by Borquin et al (2019, p. 2), “the face of British poverty is increasingly a face that receives a pay-packet – albeit often a small one.” Or, to put it another way: the need for a Living Wage to combat in-work poverty

among individuals and households has risen in line with the expansion and development of the UK Living Wage movement itself.

The rise and near-permanent embedding of in-work poverty within the UK labour market has also happened in tandem with employment rates rising to their highest ever level in Britain (Office for National Statistics, 2020), reflecting the low-paying nature of a large proportion of jobs. This is particularly prevalent in certain industries, including retail, hospitality, and the services sector (Office for National Statistics, 2019). Exacerbating the problem, low-paying industries are also typically those containing the least amount of accredited Living Wage Employers, an issue discussed in greater detail in chapter 8 of this thesis.

Additionally, a number of separate dimensions of inequality also intersect when it comes to determining which individuals and groups are most likely to experience being in either in- or out-of-work poverty. “Inequalities exist not just in income and living standards, but in wealth, health, family environments, life chances and political influence,” as well as in a host of other areas (Joyce and Xu, 2020). Geography, ethnicity, gender, disability, and education all impact on wider levels of inequality, and any study of the Living Wage must acknowledge that the roots of inequality and poverty in Britain extend far beyond the workplace itself. It is also unrealistic to presume that even if every low-paid worker within the UK were to be paid the Living Wage, these wider inequalities would also be remedied (although it is likely that the effects of them would be lessened considerably).

2.2. The legal minimum wage and the UK Living Wage: differences in values and calculations

Since the movement's origins in 2001, the UK Living Wage campaign has consistently set its own rates of what it considers to be a liveable wage within Britain to be considerably above legal minimum wage rates. A comparison between the legal and voluntary rates over the course of the campaign can be seen below:

Figure 2 UK/London Living Wage rates vs National Minimum/Living Wage rates

Year	London Living Wage	UK Living Wage	National Minimum / National Living Wage
2003/2004	£6.40		£4.50
2004/2005	£6.50		£4.85
2005/2006	£6.70		£5.05
2006/2007	£7.05		£5.35
2007/2008	£7.20		£5.52
2008/2009	£7.45		£5.73
2009/2010	£7.60		£5.80
2010/2011	£7.85		£5.93
2011/2012	£8.30	£7.20	£6.08
2012/2013	£8.55	£7.45	£6.19
2013/2014	£8.80	£7.65	£6.31
2014/2015	£9.15	£7.85	£6.50
2015/2016	£9.40	£8.25	£6.70
2016/2017	£9.75	£8.45	£7.20
2017/2018	£10.20	£8.75	£7.50
2018/2019	£10.55	£9.00	£7.83
2019/2020	£10.75	£9.30	£8.21
2020/21	TBA (Nov 2020)	TBA (Nov 2020)	£8.72

Source: Living Wage Foundation, 2020

While a more detailed analysis of the political machinations behind the calculations of the UK Living Wage are discussed in chapters 3 and 8, it is important to note here the basic differences between how what is legally required by the state for employers to pay as an hourly minimum, and what the campaign itself is voluntarily asking individual organisations to raise their rates to, are calculated.

For the calculation of legal minimum wage rates, specifically the National Living Wage introduced in 2015, the intention has been to raise hourly rates of pay to 60 per cent of median earnings. This was achieved in April 2019, with a new further target set to be established (but not yet confirmed) of reaching two-thirds of median earnings by 2024 (Low Pay Commission, 2019). While these rises are more ambitious than has been typically expected of a Conservative government (D'Arcy and Kelly, 2015), the calculation for these rises has nonetheless been criticised as not considering the impact on poverty across the UK of not setting rates at a higher level (Cominetti, Henehan and Clarke, 2019).

In contrast, the UK Living Wage (and the separate London Living Wage rate) is calculated according to a bundle of goods which reflects the current average cost of living in the UK: or, in their own words, “a basket of goods and services that represents an acceptable standard of living, is determined through research with members of the public” (Cominetti, 2019). The rates are calculated annually by the independent think tank the Resolution Foundation, drawing on the “Minimum Income Standard” developed by Professor Donald Hirsh, of Loughborough University's Centre for Research in Social Policy. A range of household types are included within the calculation, “in order to reflect the diversity of families across the UK” (ibid).

The Living Wage campaign argues that this calculation better represents the real cost of living in the UK today, in comparison to the calculations for legal minimum wage rates, which place much less of an emphasis on the lived experiences of those in poverty. To illustrate the differences of approach between how legal minimum wage rates are calculated in comparison to calculations for the UK Living Wage, consider the differences between increases in the voluntary London and national Living Wage rates set between 2018-2019, and 2019-20, as explained by Kelly (2019) below:

There have been smaller increases in the cost of some important items in London compared to the rest of the UK. Housing costs (weighted across family types) rose by 0.9 per cent in London compared to 2.4 per cent outside it. This is the single most significant factor explaining the smaller rise in London compared to the rest of the UK. It marks a reversal of last year's situation when rents went up by 2.9 per cent in London versus 1.8 per cent outside it. We also see a similar pattern in relation to childcare costs where this

year's increase was, again, smaller in London, serving to dampen the rise in the London rate relative to the UK one.

(Kelly, 2019, p. 3)

The intricate considerations of key cost of living rises within London and across the UK that are inherent to these annual calculations, and the complex detail of how such changes affect the final wage rates which are ultimately arrived at, demonstrate a key difference between how the voluntary UK Living Wage is calculated in contrast to legal minimum wage rates. Beyond the fact that there is no geographical consideration at all of the higher costs of living in London in calculations for legal hourly rates of pay (Padley, 2019), there is also no consideration of the impact of rises in the cost of essentials that workers need to afford to be able to enjoy a decent standard of living.

Despite these different approaches to determining hourly rates of pay, concerns about the effectiveness of the calculation of the UK Living Wage itself, and whether one hourly wage rate (and a separate figure for London) can accurately account for the vast disparities in income and wealth among different households, have been raised by some. Coats (2007), for example, argues that:

Some campaigners have suggested that the NMW should be converted into a 'living wage' of £7.00 an hour or more. This is misconceived . . . what constitutes a 'living wage' will vary by household type; single people, childless couples, single parents and families with two parents, one earner and more than one child all have different needs.

(Coats, 2007, p. 7)

In a similar fashion, Hick (2018) states that the issue of low pay and who requires a "living wage" can also be complicated by the fact that some low earners are supported by others in their household, although such a state of affairs can in itself lead to individuals and households becoming trapped within the in-work poverty cycle:

One thing that we know about in-work poverty is that many low-paid workers are not poor, often because they are second or third earners in a household, while not all working households in poverty have a low-paid member. The latter may fall into poverty because,

even if not technically low paid, their wage has to stretch too far, either in terms of the number of people who rely on it or because of other costs such as housing.

(Hick, 2018)

It remains the case, then, that while the UK Living Wage movement has constructed an evidence-based, cost of living-focused bedrock for the calculations that they set their Living Wage and London Living Wage rates at, and promote as rates that enable workers at the lower end of the income scale to afford a decent standard of living, the debate still continues as to whether an alternative approach could be utilised instead. The thoughts and perspectives of Living Wage-paid workers themselves on whether the rates are set at the appropriate level are discussed more in chapter 7 of this thesis.

2.3. In-work poverty and the state: the role of social security support and the tax system

It is important to note that the hourly rates of pay that an individual worker receives is not the only influence on whether they are likely to experience the effects of in-work poverty: adequate protection and support from poverty is also one of the primary responsibilities of the welfare state and social security support system, and whether such support is adequate (or indeed forthcoming at all) can help to make a considerable difference in ensuring that an individual and/or their household can maintain financial pace with the current cost of living in the UK. Taxation policies are also of paramount importance in helping to alleviate the economic burden on low-paid workers, and can be targeted most effectively to help those at the bottom of the income scale the most when constructed and implemented in tandem with in-work benefit systems. Together, these two separate but interrelated branches of the state (typically referred to in combination with each other as tax and benefit policies) considerably impact on the amount of earnings that low-paid workers receive, and by what level their insubstantial salaries are topped up to a liveable standard.

The past two decades has seen a considerable amount of change in the tax and in-work benefit policies that impact on the household income of low-paid workers within Britain (Bourquin et al, 2019). Changes to tax and benefit policies have also considerably lessened the impact on tackling in-work poverty that could have been achieved through legal minimum wage rate rises brought in with the introduction of the National Living Wage in 2015, discussed more above and

in chapter 8 of this thesis. While NLW rates of pay have been consistently far below UK Living Wage campaign rates (see figure 2 above), any benefits for low-paid workers that would have been received from these modest increases have been tempered by the tax and benefit system. Innes (2020) demonstrates that while the introduction of the NLW has successfully raised the hourly wage of the lowest-paid workers:

Low-income families don't keep that much of any extra income they get from work, because they see their social security payments reduced as they earn more. Most Universal Credit claimants only get to keep 37p in every extra pound they earn; some keep even less. . . and wider reductions in benefit levels have left families with little protection to cope with their low earnings.

(Innes, 2020, p. 17)

Innes makes an explicit link between the necessity of reforms to the tax and benefit system in order to effectively tackle in-work poverty through means other than the raising of hourly rates of pay, arguing that raising wages “isn't a substitute for a decent social security system” (ibid, p. 10). He also argues that a lack of guaranteed hours is a key driver of in-work poverty within the UK, and “alongside action to raise hourly pay, we need to enable people in low-income families to work as many hours as they would like to” (ibid, p.16). The importance of both guaranteed hours and the sufficient availability of enough hours in a working week and/or month for an individual worker to earn a sufficient wage are themes that are discussed throughout this thesis, most particularly in chapters 7 and 8.

The impact of the tax and benefit system on take-home pay for low-paid workers discussed above demonstrates the interplay between the state and employers when it comes to determining whether or not organisations voluntarily setting wages at UK Living Wage rate of pay can fundamentally protect workers from the effects of in-work poverty by themselves. A key theme of this thesis is that the Living Wage does not operate in isolation, but in tandem (and sometimes in conflict) with a multitude of other actors and stakeholders, and always alongside Britain's social security support system and taxation policies.

2.4. Developments in insecure and precarious employment

Beyond the failure of successive British governments to uprate legal minimum wage rates in line with ongoing increases to the cost of living (Cominetti and Slaughter, 2020), the other most important factor in exacerbating the pervasiveness of in-work poverty in recent years has been the rise of ever more insecure and precarious forms of employment across the UK labour market.

The most insecure forms of these new forms of employment are those that remove the traditional employer-employee relationship from being a consideration (Kalleberg, 2009). These include, but are not limited to, the increase in use of zero-hours contracts, which do not guarantee workers a certain number of hours of work per week; the utilisation of “bogus self-employment” arrangements, in which a worker is misclassified as self-employed in order for an employer to avoid the wider financial obligations (for example pension contributions) of retaining employees; and the dramatic increase in both the UK and more widely in outsourcing and the establishment of permanent subcontracted employment agency employment structures within an organisation’s workforce (International Labour Organisation, 2016).

Of particular note for this thesis is the continued growth in two-tiered employment structures within many organisations, now seemingly a permanent feature of the UK labour market. Such structures are created when employers outsource the workers who perform typically lower-paid work, for example cleaning, catering, or security roles, to subcontracted firms that employ individuals on lower pay than permanent employees. Subcontracted workers are also more typically employed on insecure contracts that do not guarantee a certain number of hours of work per week (Reed, 2014).

By the beginning of 2020, individuals within the UK working on zero-hours contracts and/or classed as self-employed had reached unprecedented highs within the UK labour market, at 3 per cent and 12 per cent of the UK’s total workforce respectively, and the number of self-employed workers in general rising by 1 million since the 2008 financial crisis to the time of writing (Harrison, 2020).

In 2020, the widespread prevalence of insecure forms of work within the UK labour market was exposed as unsustainable by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the lack of employment protections for millions of workers not covered by a traditional employer-employee relationship. With so

many jobs unable to be performed due to lockdown restrictions, these workers found themselves ineligible for sick pay, or unable to claim assistance with childcare costs, among other issues (Vickers and Hutchings, 2020).

Buttle (2020) has argued that the epidemic of low-paid and insecure forms of employment within Britain exposed by COVID-19 has demonstrated more clearly than ever the importance of strengthening worker protection against the threat of unexpected circumstances. He draws a clear line in the sand between the “business as usual” approach of a lack of employer responsibility towards their workforce in a pre-pandemic age, and how organisations will need to change in the future in order to be successful:

A failure to take a long-term approach to staff has left companies vulnerable during the crisis. As they look to recover, investing in their workforce will be vital to limit employee turnover, boost productivity and ensure their reputations remain intact. Business-as-usual will no longer be an option. Companies and investors alike will need to redefine their social purpose, or face the public backlash, protests and boycotts that come.

(Buttle, 2020)

The importance of investing in staff to improve organisational turnover rates, raise productivity standards among workers, and improve a firm’s public reputation are also arguments commonly put forward by the Living Wage campaign and accredited Living Wage Employers themselves, who argue that a strong “business case” for raising wages exists. These are issues that will be discussed in greater detail in chapters 5 and 8 of this thesis.

2.5. The evolution of trade unions within an evolving employment landscape

Alongside the proliferation of these new and varied forms of insecure employment, a series of new trade unions and patterns of worker resistance have emerged alongside them, establishing new models of labour organising as they continue to develop. These new trade unions have less in common with the centralised “traditional trade union” model of the likes of Unison, Unite, or the GMB, but are instead typically grassroots-led, and located within a specific geographical region.

United Voices of the World, for example, consists almost entirely of migrant workers operating within some form of precarious employment arrangement, most typically working as cleaners, porters, caterers, and security staff for large outsourcing firms (Staton, 2020; United Voices of the World, 2020). The union describes itself as a “members-led, campaigning trade union which supports and empowers the most vulnerable groups of precarious, low-paid and predominantly migrant workers in the UK” (United Voices of the World, 2020). The central aims of the union are, in its own words:

We campaign for all members to receive at least the London Living Wage, contractual sick pay and other rights, dignified and safe conditions, and general respect. We also challenge outsourcing itself, which creates two-tier workforces in order to slash wage bills and deny important rights.

(ibid)

Most notably, the union’s challenging of outsourcing as a permanent aspect of an organisation’s workforce structure has led to a series of victories in putting pressure on employers to reverse these decisions, and bring workers back in-house. Its first such victory occurred in June 2017 when, after a ten-month campaign, the London School of Economics agreed to end the standard practice of outsourcing cleaning services and bring nearly three hundred cleaners back in-house, alongside a change in contractual agreements for workers providing them with forty one days of annual leave, six months of full pay, and employer pension contributions of 13 per cent of an employee’s salary (United Voices of the World, 2017). The campaign forced the university to terminate its £5 million annual cleaning contract with the outsourcing firm Noonan, and was followed by similar victories at a series of other London universities, including SOAS, King’s College, and Goldsmiths. These victories are reminiscent of some of the early victories of Citizens UK, in particular in persuading Queen Mary University of London to bringing its own cleaners back in-house (Wills, 2009), discussed more in the next chapter of this thesis.

United Voices of the World is an interesting example that speaks to many of the wider themes of this thesis. The union demonstrates the changing industrial relations landscape, in which new and varied actors and stakeholders among both civil society and the labour market itself are emerging to campaign for higher wages and decent working standards, in different ways to the centralised, traditional collective bargaining trade union model of old. Its emphasis on outsourcing, and the

injustices of two-tier wage structures across a workforce, underline the centrality of the role of subcontractors and supply chain networks in perpetuating wage inequality and in-work poverty within the UK labour market, and the opportunities for challenging this state of affairs through both worker-led protest, and voluntary employer action. UVW also show that while the focus of this particular thesis is on the Citizens UK and Living Wage Foundation-led campaign for the UK Living Wage, there is a wider group of stakeholders involved in its own protests and battles utilising the measure as a central goal of their struggle, and that the lines between trade unions and civil society actors are becoming increasingly blurred as both the industrial relations and employment landscapes continue to change and evolve. These arguments are in line with the stakeholder theory perspective applied throughout this thesis, as a theoretical framework and means of understanding the Living Wage campaign through not only its central constituents, but from the wide variety of individuals and groups that surround it, interact with it, and inform its actions and priorities.

The changing nature of trade unions and civil society actors involved in campaigning for higher wages and decent working standards for low-paid workers are discussed more in the next chapter of this thesis.

2.6. The importance of an effective regulatory framework

An ongoing argument of this thesis is that labour market institutions, and the wider regulatory framework that employers operate within in, are of paramount importance in safeguarding against the ongoing existence and prevalence of in-work poverty and insecure forms of employment. Despite the technological innovations that have made the emergence of ever-more insecure working standards possible (seen most clearly in the dramatic rise of the gig economy), such innovations do not necessarily mean that such a state of affairs is inevitable. Hudson-Sharp and Runge, for example, note that “the UK stands as an exceptional case regarding the drivers and nature of the increasing use of non-standard forms of work” (2017, p. 4), arguing that:

Whilst many European countries have seen an increase in what we can call ‘traditional’ insecure forms of work, such as fixed-term contracts or marginal part-time work, the liberal UK labour market has seen expansions in more atypical forms of work, such as zero-hours contracts, temporary agency working and (bogus) self-employment.

(ibid, p. 5)

Perhaps most pertinently, they argue strongly that the deregulated nature of the UK labour market not only does not effectively regulate against insecure and precarious forms of employment, but in its lax approach even incentivises such business models as an accepted form of operating:

The highly deregulated labour market in the UK provides incentives for a variety of atypical working relationships such as zero hours contracts, temporary agency working and bogus self-employment. It is therefore not surprising that the UK has seen a larger increase in insecure work since the financial crisis than many other countries.

(ibid, p. 4)

This highlights the role of the regulatory framework of a nation in effectively strengthening safeguards against the accepted use of unethical business practices and/or models, in this case concerning forms of employment which leave workers vulnerable to the effects of in-work poverty. In a similar fashion, Giesselmann (2014) identifies weaknesses and differences in labour market regulation within Germany as a key driver in the exacerbation of in-work poverty indicators across the country, arguing that “Germany’s closed employment system channels the effects of deregulation policies to the periphery of the labour market. . .leading to higher in-work poverty risks” (2014, p. 42).

It is perhaps inevitable, then, that when such regulatory failures exist within an employment landscape, a civil regulatory framework begins to emerge to provide voluntary oversight of employers in those places where the state has failed to do so. This has led to the rise in both the UK and across the world of a new “decent work” agenda, focused on raising wages and wider decent working standards among individual organisations by means of a voluntary-led approach.

2.7. The rise of the “decent work” agenda

Over the past two decades, the ongoing growth in size and ambition of the Living Wage movement has also seen the parallel establishment and evolution of a wider “decent work” agenda, both within Britain and on a global scale. While the specific definition of what exactly constitutes “decent work” standards continues to be debated and discussed (MacNaughton and

Frey, 2010; Ruggiero, Cohen, and Cole, 2014; Fabio and Blusten, 2016; Dodd, Hooley, and Burke, 2019), the International Labour Organisation, who have been leading international efforts within this field since the turn of the century (Vosko, 2002; Ruggiero et al, 2015), define the term as follows:

Decent work sums up the aspirations of people in their working lives. It involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.

(International Labour Organisation, 2020)

At the UN General Assembly in September 2015, the concept of decent work, and the four pillars of the ILO's "Decent Work Agenda" – employment creation, social protection, rights at work, and social dialogue – also became essential components of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (ibid). Goal 8 of the 2030 Agenda now commits the United Nations to "promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all" (United Nations, 2015), cementing the decent work agenda as a global policy priority for both this decade and the next.

Vosko (2002) argues that the development of the decent work agenda at the international institutional level was driven by a disparate group of trade unions, labour organisations in formal and informal employment sectors, women's organisations, and other non-governmental organisations, and that "although the nature of their struggles for global social justice differ, as do the ultimate goals of the actors moving them forward, they are collectively committed to raising the profile of deteriorating labour rights and standards worldwide" (p. 19-20). Vosko also notes that the establishment of a formal "Decent Work Agenda" within the ILO itself was:

A skilful effort at mediating escalating tensions inside the ILO between global capital, backed by a majority of industrialized states, and an increasingly vocal group of member states, trade unions, women's organizations and other NGOs concerned with improving the lives of marginalized workers.

(ibid, p. 20)

There are parallels here with the establishment of the Living Wage Foundation by Citizens UK in 2011, in the ways in which the differing demands of separate stakeholders within the industrial relations and employment landscape must be accommodated in a balanced way to create wider momentum and “buy-in” amongst relevant actors, in order to have the greatest chance of improving working standards. As discussed more in chapter 8 of this thesis, the establishment of the Foundation satisfied both the desire of employers to be publicly recognised for their decision to voluntarily pay the Living Wage, creating a recognisable logo and award that they could display within their offices, while also ensuring that workers and wider supporters of the measure could be assured that the civil oversight of employers in paying such wages was being effectively regulated, through the creation of a formal accreditation body to oversee these efforts.

2.8. The proliferation of voluntary accreditation schemes

Within Britain itself, the rise of the decent work agenda has seen the launch of a number of independent accreditation schemes aimed at persuading employers to voluntarily decide to raise their working standards, in a number of different regions. Many of these schemes have a clear design overlay with the Living Wage Foundation’s own accreditation model, and in many cases require that organisations become accredited Living Wage Employers too as part of their own scheme’s criteria.

The Greater Manchester Combined Authority’s “Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter,” for example, launched in January 2020, describes itself as “a voluntary membership and assessment scheme which has been created to improve employment standards across all Greater Manchester employers, regardless of size, sector or geography” (GMCA, 2020). The Charter requires employees to “demonstrate excellent practice in key characteristics of employment practice” (ibid), namely by offering secure work; flexible work; accreditation with the Living Wage Foundation; workplace engagement and voice; excellent recruitment practices and progression; excellent people management; and a productive and healthy workplace. Having met all of these criteria, prospective employers are then formally accredited and tasked with meeting with other employers to encourage them to also apply.

Further down the country, the Mayor of London’s “Good Work Standard,” launched in July 2019, has a similar scope and focus, asking employers to meet a certain set of guidelines under four separate categories of fair pay and conditions; workplace wellbeing; skills and progression; and diversity and recruitment. Formal accreditation with the Living Wage Foundation is a requirement under the “fair pay and conditions” category, as is evidence that an employer has “worked with your supply chain to sign up to pay the London Living Wage and become accredited,” as well as “avoided and/or limited the use of non-standard contract workers such as self-employed, zero-hour contracts, and others” (London Assembly, 2019). The latter requirements speak to the wider impact on decent working standards that employers can have through voluntary actions, discussed in more detail in chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis.

In line with the Living Wage Foundation’s own arguments for the “business case” in persuading employers to implement the Living Wage, the Good Work Standard argues that there are a number of strategic business benefits of accreditation with the scheme, namely “attracting, recruiting and retaining the best skills and talent; reduced absences and sick leave; higher levels of employee engagement and motivation; Increased productivity; cost savings; reputational gain” (ibid).

Other accreditation models have also been launched with the goal of voluntarily raising standards among employers in a more select area, seen for example in the launch in 2018 by the charity Business in the Community (BITC) of their “Race at Work Charter,” which asks employers to commit to “taking practical steps to ensure workplaces are tackling barriers ethnic minority people face in recruitment and progression . . . in doing so they can ensure that their organisations are representative of British society” (BITC, 2018).

The emergence of this proliferation in decent work accreditation schemes across Britain are of relevance to this thesis for a number of reasons. Firstly, they provide an interesting point of comparison with the Living Wage Foundation’s own accreditation model, and the evolution of the wider UK Living Wage movement from a community-based, direct-action coalition, to a business-friendly, professional accreditation body, similar to the decent work charters and schemes discussed above. They are also the latest and most concrete example of the rise of the wider decent work agenda across the UK labour market and employment relations landscape. It

is likely that this is an agenda that will continue to grow in focus, as the wider causes of insecure work continue to remain and proliferate.

2.9. The Decent Work agenda and the importance of regulation: the Taylor Review

In 2017, the Conservative-led government commissioned the Taylor Review of modern working practices, cementing the decent work agenda as a major national policy focus (Dodd, Hooley, and Burke, 2019). The Review had a broad focus, examining among other issues the increase in use of zero-hours contracts; job security; the emergence of the gig economy; issues around workers classed as self-employed (sometimes incorrectly); and pay and job security more widely.

The Review made a number of specific recommendations, including the idea of establishing a legal “right to request” for employees to ask their employers for guaranteed hours, and asking a government minister to “commit to delivering quality work” (Taylor, 2017, p. 109), but contained no suggestions of any regulatory changes or additional oversight of employers in helping to facilitate the establishment of stronger working standards for all workers across the UK. While Taylor acknowledged that “having employment is itself vital to people’s health and well-being, the quality of people’s work is also a major factor in helping people to stay healthy and happy” (ibid, p. 6), the Review also takes a rather relaxed approach to reforming outdated regulatory standards:

National policy cannot mandate best practice and should not put extra burdens on those already acting responsibly. It can and should support good practice and ensure that those who aim for better work – on either side of the work relationship – should not have to do so in the face of regulatory barriers, opaque rules or unfair competition.

(ibid, p. 7)

This laissez-faire approach to reforming outdated traditions and establishing a new regulatory framework across the UK that can better regulate a changing employment landscape was met with considerable disappointment by experts in the field, from policy experts to trade unions to workers themselves. Jason Moyer-Lee, general secretary of the IWGB (the Independent Workers union of Great Britain), argued that “when one looks at the actual recommendations, it is full of vacuous fluff and light on substantive proposals” (Moyer-Lee, 2017). TUC general secretary

Frances O’Grady criticised in particular the “right to request” guaranteed hours proposal, arguing that:

A ‘right to request’ guaranteed hours is no right at all for many workers trapped on zero-hours contracts. And workers deserve the minimum wage for every minute they work, not just the time employers choose to pay them for.

(O’Grady, 2017)

Within the academy, Woodcock (2017) criticised both the approach taken and the content of the report, arguing in particular that the Review failed to acknowledge the almost-permanence of the existence of insecure and non-decent work within the UK labour market:

The report focuses on the idea of “quality work”, not recognising that the degradation of the modern workplace – from call centres, delivery, transport, and care – is not some kind of aberration, but central to the business models of these companies.

(Woodcock, 2017)

Woodcock also took issue with the light-touch approach to regulatory oversight of decent working standards, arguing that the Review contained “no serious suggestions for enforcement, with no measures to address breaches or remove the obstructive fees for employment tribunals” (ibid). Chamberlain (2017) similarly complained that the Review overlooked what he declared one of the most glaring and obvious gaps in the regulatory oversight of decent working standards, namely the legal clarification of what “self-employment” is defined as, and the need to better protect those workers misclassified as self-employed:

Instances where individuals are misclassified as self-employed must be resolved. Taylor goes some way towards it – the report calls for clearer legislation on status – but what’s really needed is a statutory definition of self-employment. Currently self-employment is a default category assigned to those who are neither employees nor workers. If we are to have any meaningful understanding of who is genuinely self-employed, we first need to be clear about what self-employment is.

(Chamberlain, 2017)

The wider membership of the panel which constructed the Review was also criticised, and which included an investor in the gig economy firm Deliveroo, already the subject of criticism for its own role in perpetuating insecure and precarious working standards (Hudson-Sharp and Runge, 2017; Cant, 2019), and a corporate lawyer who specialised in protecting employers against claims of indecent working standards. No worker groups or trade unions were represented on the panel, either, despite the key focus of the Review being the improvement of working conditions for low-paid workers.

One interesting point of note particularly relevant to this thesis, however, is the recommendation from the Review to expand the focus of the Low Pay Commission (LPC), an independent commission of experts which advise the government on legal minimum wage rates (including the National Living Wage), from a solitary focus on hourly pay rates to a broader acknowledgement of the issues that impact on low-paid work:

The Review believes that it is time for the focus of the LPC to expand. As we know, pay is not the only determinant of quality work and the LPC should be tasked with the broader function of working with sectors to improve the quality of low paid work.

(Taylor, 2017)

Taylor also argued that the LPC “should have its remit widened so that it can both make recommendations to Government on what needs to change (including NMW rates) to improve quality of work in the UK, as well as work with employers, employees and stakeholders to promote quality work across all regions and sectors.” These recommendations underline one of the key arguments of this thesis: that the raising of wages and the wider facilitation of decent working standards are not two separate areas of policy and organisational change, but inextricably linked with one another in tackling in-work poverty within the UK.

Since the Taylor Review took place, there has been little or no further recommendations or reforms to labour market regulation within Britain that governs the facilitation and enforcement of decent working standards, in much the same manner as national minimum wage rates are still broadly considered set at levels insufficient to enable them to afford a decent standard of living. The Taylor Review is discussed within this chapter to help illustrate the existing weaknesses from the state in providing an effective regulatory framework that can help to safeguard against

the utilisation of business models that leave workers vulnerable to in-work poverty across Britain. Given the failure of the state in this policy arena, then, there is a greater requirement for voluntary forms of civil regulation, and the oversight of employers through civil society actors such as the Living Wage Foundation, in promoting the adoption and maintenance of higher wages and decent working standards within the UK today. The rise of a number of civil regulatory decent work accreditation schemes in recent years, promoted and facilitated by a wide variety of stakeholders across the employment landscape from local authorities to the Mayor of London, can be argued to be a direct response to the weaknesses of existing regulatory oversight and enforcement controls in strengthening safeguards against poor working practices.

2.10. In-work progression as a pathway out of in-work poverty

There is one specific link concerning the decent work agenda which forms a clear link with the central mission of the Living Wage campaign that is of particular note here, namely the issue of in-work progression and its role in combating in-work poverty. The existence of clear and permanent in-work progression pathways and opportunities for low-paid workers is a regularly listed aspect of what is considered under the “decent work” umbrella term (Stuart et al, 2016; Green et al, 2016; Sissons et al, 2016; Evans, 2017), albeit not an aspect that receives as much attention as those of zero-hours contracts and the insecurity of agency employment, to take two examples.

In-work progression as a pathway out of in-work poverty has, however, also been utilised by national policymakers as a primary rationale and objective for the implementation of Universal Credit, a new form of social security support benefit introduced by the British government in 2013. Policymakers have argued that “progress in breaking the cycle of people getting stuck in low pay, low prospects employment” is an important aim of Universal Credit as a new unified social security payment measure (Work and Pensions Committee, 2017), and been specifically equated with permanent earnings progression (Social Security Advisory Committee, 2017). Whether these ambitions have been successful to date, however, is still the subject of much debate within the literature (Cheetham et al, 2019; Craig and Katikireddi, 2020). Questions have also been raised about the ethics of Universal Credit claimants being penalised for seemingly not seeking out in-work progression routes even when an employer has not provided any such routes themselves, under the new “in-work conditionality” structure which can lead to individuals

having their social security payments sanctioned, leaving them in even greater financial hardship than before (Abbas and Jones, 2018; Hagi, 2018). One common issue reported by workers concerning a lack of progression pathways provided by employers is of a lack of extra or guaranteed number of hours available (Hick, 2018), a larger issue that will be returned to in chapters 7 and 8.

Despite the popularity in some policy and decent work circles of the importance of in-work progression, Hick (2018) has argued that while a focus on in-work progression as a means of tackling in-work poverty is an effective strategy on paper, to date there has not been enough of a focus on in-work progression leading to firmly established routes out of low-paid employment as a permanent transfer, arguing that “if progression is to be meaningful, it must also lead to a permanent escape from in-work poverty.” More pertinently for the focus of this thesis, Hick and Lanau’s exploration of a four-year period of in-work poverty transitions identified that the role of the social security support system was as vital as an increase in pay in raising households out of poverty:

Our research found that almost seven in ten exits from in-work poverty were associated with an increase in earnings from employment . . . but social security mattered too: in 45% of cases, an exit from in-work poverty coincided with an increase in social security income of at least 20%. Thus, social security increases as well as labour market events help to explain exits from in-work poverty.

(Hick and Lanau, 2018)

While the debate continues about the functionality of in-work progression as a means of tackling in-work poverty, then, it is discussed here especially as an example which demonstrates the interconnected nature of three key aspects discussed within this chapter, and the wider thesis itself: namely the roles of the social security support system, the voluntary actions of employers, and the existence (or lack) of decent working standards in perpetuating or limiting the incidence of in-work poverty rates within Britain. It is a reminder that the Living Wage is only one policy instrument within a larger toolkit being utilised as a means of tackling low pay and in-work poverty in the UK, that employers also have it within their power to implement other voluntary means of decent working standards to help support their workforce, and that the Living Wage movement have the ability to put pressure on and encourage individual organisations to adopt

these wider standards too. These are themes that will be returned to in later chapters of this thesis, most specifically chapters 6, 7 and 8.

2.11. “The Wider Living Wage Movement”: non-affiliated Living Wage campaigns across Britain

One of the key arguments of this thesis, reflected in the stakeholder theory lens through which this study is being conducted, is that while this project is concerned with an examination of “the Living Wage movement” as defined by Citizens UK and the Living Wage Foundation, there are a wider number of external actors and groups that are involved in campaigning for living wages for low-paid workers in some form across Britain beyond these two organisations themselves. Some of these have already been discussed above, for example in the emergent trade union United Voices of the World, and one of its central objectives being the winning of the London Living Wage for its members. Others include the “Pay Up” campaign, a UK Uncut-styled activist campaign utilising direct action protests to put public pressure on major high street chains to pay the UK Living Wage, and specific living wage campaigns dedicated to persuading one particular employer to raise wages to a higher standard, some of which are conducted by unions rather than civil society actors (Prowse, Lopes and Fells, 2017), discussed in greater detail in the next chapter’s review of existing literature within this field.

Others have formed their own living wage (lower case to distinguish such campaigns from the “UK Living Wage” which is the key focus of this study) campaigns across Britain, situated in specific towns, cities or regions, which include their own rates of pay external to what the Living Wage Foundation promote. The most high-profile of these is the Brighton and Hove living wage campaign, established in 2011 at the same time as Citizens UK launched the Living Wage Foundation, and jointly run by Brighton and Hove Council and the Brighton Chamber of Commerce (again, demonstrating the diverse range of stakeholders involved in the wider living wage arena). Like the Living Wage Foundation themselves, the Brighton movement campaigns for local employers to voluntarily accredit as official living wage employers, after which they receive a “Brighton and Hove Living Wage” logo which they can utilise on their premises or marketing material, replicating the Foundation’s original model. The campaign has accredited over six hundred local employers to date (Living Wage Brighton, 2020).

Another primary example is the Oxford living wage campaign, an accreditation scheme established in 2015 and run by Oxford City Council, which has set the “Oxford living wage” at 95 per cent of the London Living Wage, reflecting the high cost of living in Oxford (Oxford City Council, 2020). The Council argues that:

The Oxford Living Wage has been created to promote liveable earnings for workers. It reflects the fact that Oxford is one of the most expensive cities to live in the UK, and helps accredited employers demonstrate they value their workforce. With expensive housing in the city, many workers have to choose between spending more money to live in the city, or more on travel to get to work.

(Oxford City Council, 2020)

The formulation and facilitation of the Oxford and Brighton living wage campaigns by their respective city councils also further underlines the complexity of individual state actors and their involvement in living wage campaigns, and by so doing establishing a *de facto* acceptance of the importance of higher wages than legal minimum wage rates to protect workers from in-work poverty. This is a theme that runs throughout this thesis, and is discussed in greater detail in chapter 8.

2.12. The changing parameters and norms of “corporate social responsibility”

While the concept of “corporate social responsibility” (CSR) has been a key part of debates about the role and responsibilities of employers in society since the 1950s (Bowen, 1953), the constituent parts of what is actually being discussed under the term have evolved considerably since then, responding to wider developments and seismic shifts in the cultural, political, and socioeconomic landscape around and within the world of work during this time. As discussed in greater detail above, in the UK and many other countries across the world this has now extended to include a greater deal of responsibility and social obligations for employers to ensure that their own employees are not experiencing the effects of in-work poverty, and the voluntary implementation of decent working standards in areas where the state has failed to establishment an effective regulatory framework which enforces such standards by default, in a legally enforceable manner.

In recent years, there has been a definitive broadening of opportunities for employers to demonstrate their various corporate social responsibility policies in a public manner, and to receive plaudits from the public, civil society organisations, and trade unions for voluntarily launching initiatives without external pressure to do so. Many of these opportunities have emerged alongside a greater focus within the world of work on the importance of diversity and inclusion among an organisation's workforce (Cornelius, 2002; Wright et al, 2006; Tomlinson and Schwabenland, 2009; O' Donovan, 2017; CIPD, 2020), with a great deal of employers publicly supporting (and financially sponsoring) Pride events, or publicising and/or advertising to the wider world how inclusive they are in their employment practices as a means of demonstrating their ethical values as a business (Ross, 2016; Hall, 2019). Another notable trend has been in the considerable number of employers placing an emphasis on tackling mental health within the workplace, as a means of both demonstrating support to one's workforce, and publicly communicating a firm's corporate social responsibility credentials to fellow competitors and consumers (See Me Scotland, 2018).

There have also been a host of smaller initiatives in recent years by individual employers which aim to both expand organisational benefits for employees, and demonstrate an organisation's corporate social responsibility credentials. Key examples include the brewery chain Brewdog in 2017 becoming the sole employer in their industry to introduce puppy parental leave, or "pawternity leave" as it has been named, for their workers. Under this scheme, Brewdog employees are entitled to a paid working week's leave "to help settle a new furry family member into their home" (Brewdog, 2017). The firm have argued that "on the surface, it felt like quite a playful thing to do, but the reality is we could see it would make a tangible difference to the wellbeing of our team" (Hunter, 2019).

They have also stated that such initiatives have had an identifiable knock-on effect on the engagement and morale of the wider workforce, too, arguing that "the ripple effect that it has, not just for the individual who takes the leave and gets a new dog, but for colleagues and for the people around them, it's phenomenally engaging" (ibid). The initiative was developed after being put forward by a worker at one of the employer's question and answer sessions with the firm's directors: this theme, of the need for dynamic individuals with the ability and impetus to

successfully help influence and motivate ethically-led organisational change on an internal basis, is one theme that recurs throughout this thesis, most specifically in chapter 5.

One of the key patterns that emerges in any exploration of employers who construct and implement initiatives such as Brewdog's "pawternity leave" is that as organisations they are typically already active and engaged in a whole host of other CSR strategies and workforce benefit schemes, and much more likely to also be an accredited Living Wage Employer already. For example, Brewdog, in addition to the "pawternity leave" initiative discussed above and a host of other voluntary measures, also abolished zero-hour contracts across their workforce when they decided to adopt the Living Wage (Living Wage Foundation, 2016; Clarke, 2017). This was followed by the introduction of a new working structure of guaranteed hours for all employees, in recognition of the financial security that this provides to workers beyond a higher rate of pay, and the strategic benefits that it brings in training and keeping employees up to speed with changes within the workplace:

Management feedback showed they feel really strongly that having [one member of] staff doing five shifts a week is a lot more valuable than having two members of staff doing two shifts a week, just because things change so quickly. There's such a huge level of training and knowledge that they're expected to maintain, it's much easier when you see them five times a week than if you only see them once.

(Cook, 2016)

A clear link can be seen between initiatives such as this, which fundamentally alter the working practices of an employer's workforce, and the less disruptive nature of placing a priority on inclusivity in the workplace, or publicly supporting events like Pride. It is perhaps inevitable, then, that alongside the recent expansion in opportunities for employers to publicly demonstrate their corporate social responsibility credentials to both wider society and their own workforce, the likelihood of an organisation being accused of hypocrisy in these actions has also increased in kind (Smith and Rhiney, 2020). While organisations can typically receive plaudits from consumers and the wider public for their initiative in voluntarily launching new strategies and schemes that seek to help support their workforce and/or commit to ethical causes, this can sometimes cause as much reputational damage to a firm as much as it can raise their profile in a positive way.

There have been a number of criticisms, for example, which argue that the broad focus on “tackling mental health” by employers in recent years is a relatively cost-free symbol of demonstrating corporate social responsibility to consumers and shareholders, whilst avoiding any structural financial commitments which benefit their workforce in any specific way (Foster, 2017). This has been a particular criticism of those employers who place a premium on investing in their mental health strategies for low-paid employees, while refusing to raise their pay to a more liveable standard which would have a much larger and more dramatic increase on their mental health and wellbeing (Chandola and Zhang, 2018).

Corporate sponsorship of Pride events has also come in for a great deal of criticism in recent years, too. Dockray (2018) has termed this the “rainbow pride merch-industrial complex,” in which “corporations want the LGBTQ community to know that they’re their friends a little too much”, while others have expressed concern that such a focus on employers themselves over the political roots of such events risks having them overwhelmed by corporate financial considerations (Ross, 2016).

The corporate utilisation of Pride events, and wider attempts to seek to advertise their own ethical credentials through a focus on inclusivity and support for marginalised communities, has been termed “pinkwashing” in recent years (Luca, Schoier, and Vessio, 2016). Originally coined to describe the corporate hypocrisy behind organisations profiting from a public declaration of support for causes fighting breast cancer (Lubitow and Davis, 2011), the term follows a longer history of distaste among consumers and the wider public for corporations utilising ethical causes for their own self-interests. In the 1980s, for example, the term “greenwashing” was established to describe the public relations strategy of oil companies in attempting to persuade the public of their environmental credentials, while continuing to operate extremely harmful and environmentally-damaging practices in their daily operational activities (Watson, 2016; Gatti, Seel and Rademacher, 2019).

The history of CSR hypocrisy, then, is a long one, with consumers and other stakeholders across society continuing to be more suspicious of the corporate adoption of ethical causes than these firms would typically like. There is an increasing amount of evidence that consumers are both fully aware and actively repelled from associating with brands they suspect of “corporate social responsibility hypocrisy,” too: Shim and Yang (2016), for example, have found that such

accusations have a marked effect on consumer behaviour, particularly when an organisation already has a less than stellar public reputation, with Zhigang and Haoming also finding that perceptions of CSR hypocrisy trigger a “psychological and behavioural mechanism of consumer response” among individuals, making them instinctively retreat from interacting with an organisation (2020, p. 11). Trudel, Sen, and Dawar (2020) also argue that those consumers who are most likely to engage in ethical consumerism also hold a higher level of purposeful individual value in which companies they choose to engage with, making the likelihood that such consumers would choose to patron organisations they suspect of CSR hypocrisy even more minimal.

An increasing focus on the responsibilities of organisations to guarantee living wages and decent working conditions within their wider global supply chains is another aspect of corporate social responsibility that has sparked a great deal of interest from both consumers and employers in recent years (Pedersen And Andersen, 2006; Andersen and Skjoett-Larsen, 2009; Knudsen, 2012; Soundararajan and Brown, 2014; Görg, Hanley and Seric, 2018). These developments have a particular relevance for the findings of this project discussed in chapter 6, and one of the key arguments of this thesis: that voluntary, ethically-led actions of employers in setting higher standards for wages and decent working conditions within their subcontracted employment relationships and supply chain partners can have a considerable effect on low-paid workers beyond their own direct workforces.

In a similar fashion to the emergence in recent years of new civil society organisations and actors to oversee the need to raise wages and improve working standards across the UK, similar such stakeholders have arisen at an international level to attempt to impose a civil regulatory framework on the global supply chains of Western employers. This is perhaps most notably exemplified by the Fairtrade Foundation, a body which has a great deal in common with the Living Wage Foundation’s own strategies and operations, and which was a primary inspiration for Citizens UK in the initial establishment of the Foundation itself (discussed more in chapter 8 of this thesis).

Besides the Fairtrade Foundation itself, there are a large range of other civil society organisations that have emerged in recent years to help regulate global supply chains on a voluntary basis, in the absence of sustained and legally enforceable international regulatory standards within certain

areas. The “Clean Clothes Campaign,” for example, is a global network committed to raising working conditions and securing a living wage for workers in the global garment and sportswear industries. In a similar fashion to the inclusion of separate community groups under the “Citizens UK” umbrella, discussed more in the next chapter of this thesis, the Campaign “brings together more than 230 organisations covering a broad spectrum of perspectives and interests, such as women’s rights, consumer advocacy and poverty reduction,” and helps to “identify local problems and objectives and transform them into global actions” (Clean Clothes Campaign, 2020).

The Campaign also places a high premium on the potential to inspire effective change through the utilisation of ethical consumerism, arguing that “the public has a right to know where and how their garments and sports shoes are produced” (ibid), and that consumers having a higher awareness about the global supply chains within which these products are made may place more pressure on firms to raise their standards voluntarily. In 2019, Buckingham noted through a survey of corporate leaders with responsibility for global supply chain networks that they put very little stock in the ability of civil society actors within this field to change their working practices in any meaningful way, but also highlighted that “consumers are the stakeholders that business leaders most care about — the ones seen as holding companies to higher standards” (Buckingham, 2019). A focus on inspiring ethical consumerism among the wider public, then, is one avenue of strategy that civil society actors can apply in their attempts to influence employers: both within global supply chains, and for the Living Wage movement itself across the UK.

Beyond the obvious comparisons between the UK Living Wage campaign and the involvement of civil society actors promoting the voluntary upraising of ethical standards within global supply chains, one of the key arguments of this chapter, namely of the response by stakeholders of failures of legal regulatory oversight by creating their own civil regulatory frameworks, also applies here. Heerdenn and Bosson (2009) have argued that while a regulatory framework did exist within these areas in the past, with the creation of a legal system in which labour relations processes could be negotiated and employers held to account, “that system does not always hold, and there are countries where the legal framework is not fully elaborated, or where the laws are

not enforced” (2009, p.36). They also argue that within some countries involved with global supply chains, these regulatory mechanisms have not ever existed at all:

There are also countries where the labour relations mechanisms are not fully formed or functional. The result is that a significant percentage of the world of work is not adequately protected or regulated, leading to abuses of fundamental rights, wage, hour and occupational safety and health standards. It is in this poorly regulated context that companies are being challenged to conduct themselves in a socially responsible way.

(ibid, p.37)

It is striking that with only the briefest of edits to these remarks, the authors could be referring to the multitude of stakeholders among civil society, trade unions, and state actors themselves within the UK invested in various campaigns and accreditation schemes dedicated to challenging employers to conduct themselves in a socially responsible way through the raising of wages and the implementation of decent working standards.

Beyond civil society actors involved in the promotion of higher ethical standards within global supply chains, there are also a number of employers who have taken a values-driven approach to operating within industries that have such a wide-ranging international reach. One of these, “Tony’s Chocolonely,” is profiled below as an illustration of the role that individual organisations can play in exercising a wider form of social responsibility throughout their own supply chains.

2.13. A case study in global corporate social responsibility: Tony’s Chocolonely

A particularly interesting example in this field is the chocolatier “Tony’s Chocolonely” who, in a similar fashion to some of the UK-based employers discussed in chapter 5, have made the pursuit of value-driven operations a key part of their business model, rather than an “add-on” corporate social responsibility strategy. In the case of Tony’s Chocolonely, these values are focused upon the eradication of modern slavery in their global supply chains, and the elimination of modern slavery from the global cocoa industry more widely. The “chocolonely” in the firm’s name is a reference to the fact that they are the only chocolatier who have committed themselves to these ethically-led, voluntary standards, with each bar communicating to consumers that “alone we make slave-free chocolate, but together we’ll make all chocolate 100% slave free” (Tony’s

Chocolonely, 2020). The shape of the chocolate bars themselves are also unevenly divided intentionally, as a visual reminder of the unequal nature of the global chocolate industry:

To us it doesn't make sense for chocolate bars to be divided into chunks of equal sizes when there is so much inequality in the chocolate industry! The unevenly sized chunks of our 180g bars are a nice way of reminding our choco friends that the profits in the chocolate industry are unfairly divided.

Tony's Chocolonely, 2020

Through the shapes of their bars, and an explanation of their actions and the wider inequality within the cocoa industry printed on the inside of each wrapper, the company's products attempt to educate consumers on the reasoning behind these ethically-minded actions (examples of which can be found in the appendices of this thesis).

The example of Tony's Chocolonely demonstrates three of the key themes of this chapter: namely the need for voluntary action by individual organisations to fulfil gaps left in regulatory oversight by state actors with legal powers of enforcement; the expansion of the parameters of corporate social responsibility in recent years; and the individual impact that employers can have on a wider proportion of low-paid workers through changing the standards that they put in place within their own supply chain networks.

2.14. Conclusions

This chapter has set out the wider contextual landscape for this study of the UK Living Wage campaign, and the consequent multi-level impacts on Britain's industrial relations and employment landscapes that this thesis is concerned with. It explores the root causes and ongoing severity of in-work poverty within Britain, including the differences in calculation and intention between the UK Living Wage and legal minimum wage rates of pay, and the wider causes of this phenomenon beyond unsubstantial hourly rates of pay in and of themselves, as the UK has continued to experience the establishment of an increasing number of insecure and precarious forms of employment in recent years. It argues that the raising of wages and the wider facilitation of decent working standards are not two separate areas of policy and organisational change that can be studied in isolation, but ones that are inextricably linked with one another in understanding (and tackling) in-work poverty within the UK.

This chapter argues that the existence and prevalence of both low hourly wage rates and precarious employment standards within the UK are the consequences of a deregulated labour market which does not have appropriate legal safeguards in place to combat these conditions emerging, and which have led to the ongoing increases in the rates of in-work poverty seen over the past two decades. It also argues that the civil regulatory frameworks surrounding the UK Living Wage and the wider decent work agenda are a direct response to these regulatory failures, and so long as such gaps in enforcement exist, civil society actors and individual employers will continue to play a larger role in maintaining higher wages and decent working standards to better protect workers across the UK. These arguments are in line with the stakeholder theory perspective applied throughout this thesis, which frames the UK Living Wage movement as one actor (or stakeholder) within a wider industrial relations landscape, and whose actions and priorities are determined in part by the decisions of other actors.

Finally, through a discussion of the expansion of corporate social responsibility norms and parameters in recent years, including the increasing focus on the role of employers in maintaining a higher ethical standard of oversight within their global supply chains, this chapter argues that employers can have a considerable and positive impact on workers beyond their own workforce through prioritising decent wages and working standards within and amongst their subcontracted employment relationships and supply chain partners.

Chapter 3: The UK Living Wage: a review of the literature

3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents a review of the existing literature base concerning the UK Living Wage, examining the ongoing debates and discussions surrounding among other areas the decision of employers to adopt the Living Wage; the organisational impacts it can have on an organisation's workforce and wider working practices; and the establishment and development of the Living Wage campaign itself. In line with the stakeholder theory perspective which forms the theoretical framework of this thesis, relevant literature concerning other stakeholders pertinent to this study will also be incorporated, including most particularly the wider literature surrounding the concept of "community unionism" (Lipsig-Mumme, 2003; McBride and Greenwood, 2009), and the role of civil regulation in raising employment standards in those areas where the regulatory framework of the state has retreated, or indeed failed to implement any oversight at all.

To help contextualise discussions within the forthcoming findings chapters of this thesis, an exploration of the literature surrounding a number of other key areas will also be presented. The evolution of the role of civil society organisations as actors and stakeholders within the industrial relations landscape, central to understanding both the UK Living Wage movement itself but also the wider ecosystem within which it operates, will be examined. The emergence of the gig economy is also utilised as an example to help illustrate the challenges of effective regulation and the role of traditional industrial relations actors in a changing employment landscape, as well as helping to detail the expansive landscape of stakeholders with their own competing (and mutual) interests which the UK Living Wage campaign resides within.

Through this examination of the existing literature on and surrounding the establishment, evolution, and operational realities of the Living Wage movement, and the campaign's wider impacts and implications for the UK labour market and industrial relations landscape of Britain, it identifies a series of gaps which this study seeks to significantly contribute to. These include, but are not limited to, a distinct lack of focus on the lived experiences of workers themselves, as the final recipients of all efforts to promote and implement the UK Living Wage; a gap in exploring through an in-depth, qualitative approach the individual perspectives of organisational decisionmakers and their involvement in their employer's ultimate decision to adopt the

measure; an examination of the wider impacts of accreditation with the Living Wage Foundation on an accrediting firm's subcontracted employment relationships and supply chain networks; and an analysis of the Living Wage movement's more recent developments, most specifically in the individual projects and remit of the Living Wage Foundation itself.

3.2. Structure of the review

The following sections present and discuss the existing empirical literature base of the UK living Wage. In line with the research questions of this thesis, these are divided into three separate sections based on these questions, namely the reasoning of individual employers for adoption of the Living Wage, and subsequent formal accreditation with the Living Wage Foundation; the organisational impacts of accreditation; and those that are focused upon the campaign itself, from its formation in 2001 to its present operations almost two decades later. Much of the literature discussed cross over these boundaries at times, reflecting the mutual aims and objectives of much of the research within this field to better understand the decisions of employers for adopting the Living Wage, and the organisational impact of the measure's implementation.

The chapter then moves on to a review of the wider theoretically-focused literature concerning the UK Living Wage, and the establishment and evolution of the campaign itself. In line with the ongoing key points of discussion and debate within the field, these are centred around two key areas: the changing role of civil society actors within the British employment and industrial relations landscapes, and their role in facilitating the expansion of civil regulation across the UK labour market.

Finally, the emergence of the gig economy and the debates within the literature surrounding its continued development is utilised as an illustration of the changing employment and industrial relations landscapes of Britain, to help contextualise the UK Living Wage campaign within the wider ecosystem of actors and stakeholders that it is part of, and operates within.

3.3. Setting the Foundations of the Field

Before focusing upon a number of key subdivisions of the wider UK Living Wage literature, it is important to understand the wider context in which the first academic research within this field was undertaken and published. Much of the earliest literature and wider scholarly work concerning the UK Living Wage was undertaken by Professor Jane Wills, of Queen Mary,

University of London. Primarily a labour geographer, Wills established a place-based focus to the emergent scholarly works on the campaign and the Living Wage itself, reflecting the community coalition, grassroots-led organisation of Citizens UK. In this vein, the first “Living Wage research” within the field was authored by Wills and commissioned by The East London Communities Organisation, or TELCO, the previous form of London Citizens (discussed in greater detail in chapter 8 of this thesis), with the primary focus being to “map low pay in East London” (2001).

Written five months after the formal launch of the Living Wage campaign in April 2001, the report was a comprehensive means of setting out the landscape of low pay and in-work poverty prevalent across East London at the time of writing, and which necessitated the establishment of a civil society campaign aimed at putting pressure on employers to raise the pay rates of low-paid workers suffering the effects of in-work poverty. In line with the overriding goal of the campaign, namely the tackling of in-work poverty so that more workers can spend more time with their children, the report places a key focus on the gap between what the current legal minimum wage was, with what families in the four boroughs of East London actually needed in order to afford a decent standard of living:

The level of the National Minimum Wage is such that it is insufficient to effectively tackle child and adult poverty in London. . . a family with two parents working, one full time and one part-time, would need to earn £322 a week. If these families were to live without means-tested benefits, each adult would need to earn £6.30 an hour. TELCO is now campaigning to see that public sector bodies in particular. . . pay all staff a locally appropriate living wage.

(Wills, 2001, p. 5)

The report also details wider issues of low pay within East London, including cases of hourly rates paid below even the legal minimum wage of 2001, and concludes with a succinct summation of the moral and business cases for individual employers to pay the Living Wage:

Improving the pay and conditions of workers . . . would augment the quality of services provided, stimulate greater investment in staff training, improve staff morale and help alleviate poverty in some of the most deprived communities in the country.

(*ibid.*, p. 24)

The report also places a primary focus on the “poverty pay” rates of workers employed by major subcontracting firms, interviewing almost one hundred workers employed by subcontractors working alongside direct employees in industries as diverse as health, local authorities, education, transport, and the large financial institutions of Canary Wharf. Wills makes frequent reference to one of the first demands of the Living Wage campaign, namely that “public sector bodies in particular should ensure that their own contractors [pay liveable wages], preferably by writing into the contractors an obligation to pay a locally appropriate living wage” (*ibid.*, p. 6).

While primarily aimed at garnering support among a wide variety of stakeholders for the burgeoning campaign, this first piece of literature on the UK Living Wage also establishes some of the central points of debate and discussion within the field still of importance and relevance to this day. This includes the gap between legal minimum wage rates of pay, and the Living Wage campaign’s own calculations of what is required; the first arguments in favour of a broader “business case” for the Living Wage, beyond the moral arguments for its implementation; and the importance of ensuring that outsourced workers are also paid the Living Wage, rather than missed out under an alternative agreement that only directly-employed staff members will receive it when an employer agrees to begin paying it. The demand of the campaign for the extension of Living Wage coverage to outsourced workers, then, has been a line in the sand from the beginning of the movement, and is analysed in greater detail in chapter 6 of this thesis.

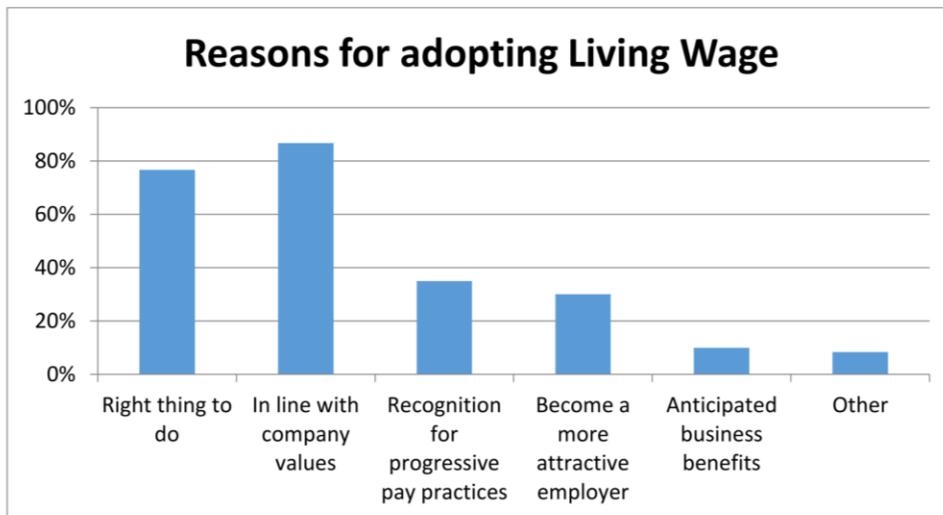
Broadly London-based, but with an increasing presence across Britain as the movement began to grow and evolve, the campaign sought to persuade employers to begin to voluntarily implement Living Wage rates of pay through adopting an activist model of publicly shaming individual organisations into doing so, focusing on particular sectors and industries that could easily afford to pay it (Wills, 2010). As such, much of the literature exploring the reasoning of early adopters of the Living Wage focuses on the specifics of the protest-based, pressure-directed campaigns aimed at individual employers which led to them agreeing to uprate their rates of pay for low-paid workers, rather than on the complexities of how and why the decisions themselves were made by employers to join the network.

3.4. Employer motivations for adoption of the Living Wage

Within the literature to date, there have been two key studies which seek to explore employer motivations for adoption of the Living Wage: Werner and Lim (2016), and Heery, Nash and Hann (2017). This study seeks to add a substantial contribution to this evolving focus of the field, through its own in-depth exploration of why employers voluntarily decide to adopt the Living Wage, discussed in greater detail in chapter 5 of this thesis. Differentiating it from the other studies in the field, this project explores the internal power dynamics of each organisation's decision to become an accredited Living Wage Employer through an in-depth, case study-focused examination of three separate organisations and their experiences in doing so, including multiple interviews with Living Wage workers themselves on their thoughts on the measure, and the voluntary nature of their employer deciding to pay it.

Werner and Lim's mixed methods approach to exploring the impact of the Living Wage on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) found that an overwhelming 77 per cent of employers responded that the decision had been taken "because it was the right thing to do," with 87 per cent stating that it was "in line with company values":

Figure 3 Employer motivations for adoption of the Living Wage



Source: Werner and Lim, 2016, p. 11

This correlates strongly with both other research in the field (in particular Heery, Hann and Nash, 2017), and testimony from Living Wage Employers themselves on their reasoning for becoming accredited. It is particularly interesting that such sentiments are consistent even within survey-based research where employers can be assured of anonymity, and therefore feel less compulsion to assert the moral case for the Living Wage as their primary motivation out of fear of reputational damage for claiming any other, more strategic reasoning.

As can be seen above, the second and third most popular responses from employers are all specific “business case” advantages of accreditation that the Living Wage Foundation communicate widely, including the reputational benefits among consumers and other stakeholders for their voluntary Living Wage status (“recognition for progressive pay practices”), and the potential for attracting a higher quality of candidate at interview stage across the organisation (“becoming a more attractive employer”). Any alternative motivations are grouped under “other” by the survey questions posed by Werner and Lim, a perhaps regrettable limitation of the study: including other potential options, for example the potential motivation of employers for accreditation in order to win and/or secure tendering contracts with already-accredited firms, may have yielded a greater depth of analysis beyond a two-way split between the moral and business case for the Living Wage.

In terms of which actors and stakeholders influenced the decision of individual employers to adopt the Living Wage, over 50 per cent of organisations argued that it was an internal decision, with the second most popular response at 30 per cent being the influence of the Living Wage Foundation:

Figure 4 Employer influences for adoption of the Living Wage



Source: Werner and Lim, 2016, p. 12

It is notable that “local Living Wage campaigners” only reportedly influenced only 5 per cent of survey employers in their decision to accredit. This reflects the primary role that the Living Wage Foundation now takes in communicating the benefits of the Living Wage and accreditation with the movement to interested (and/or sceptical) employers across the UK, and the back-seat role that the community coalition-based, direct action campaigning approach initially taken by Citizens UK in advocating for voluntary take-up of the Living Wage now plays. The benefits of this “carrot and stick” strategy, and the inherent tensions and challenges between Citizens UK and the Foundation as such a strategy continues to play out, are analysed in greater detail in chapter 8 of this thesis.

Werner and Lim also found a strong sense that the claims of a strategic “business case” for the Living Wage, consistently communicated by the Foundation itself, both do exist beyond such promotional claims, and are also rooted in the individual experiences of employers who have become accredited. The remarks of one employer in particular is striking, as a rationalisation and summation of the business benefits:

The existence of my business is 100% dependent on me being able to attract and recruit and retain the best staff in the industry... I can't operate as a business if my staff aren't as good as another one of my competitors. I can't. I can maybe attract them initially, but I can't retain staff if I don't pay them properly. The Living Wage is our starting salary and we pay more.

(ibid, p. 28)

Many of these findings are also reflected in both the findings of Heery, Nash and Hann (2017), as well as in this thesis. There is a consistency among the research within the field, along with that of this study, that a majority of those firms that have made the decision to become accredited Living Wage Employers have the capacity as organisations to join up the dots between the disparate elements of a strategic case for accreditation into a coherent whole: that in order to perform well as an organisation, the best people for the role need to be attracted to the employer, as do ethically-led consumers, and that the best way to meet these desires for high performance is to invest in higher pay for employees (that also have the added bonus of being required by workers to enable them to afford a decent standard of living). In a separate paper focused more closely on the business case for the UK Living Wage, Coulson and Bonner (2005) also argue that for the strategic business benefits of the Living Wage to be realised most effectively, a longer-term vision is required by organisational decision makers, which sees the potential workforce benefits rather than only viewing the measure's adoption through a financial lens:

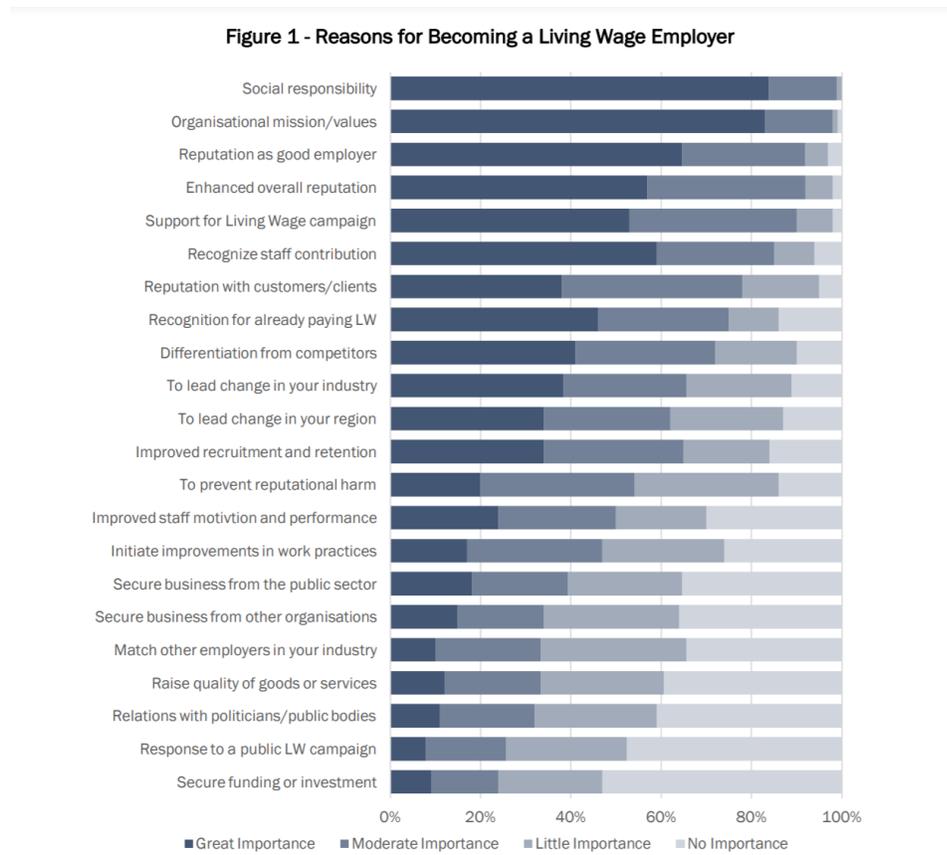
Central to the business case is recognising the financial cost of adopting the Living Wage and the potential impact on the financial capital of a business alongside value creation in terms of social welfare and arguably human 'capital' . . . and the importance of building a business case on both financial and non-financial performance criteria, quantitative and qualitative evidence.

(Coulson and Bonner, 2015, p. 39)

Within Heery, Nash and Hann's 2017 own extensive research exploring the experiences of the accredited Living Wage Employer network to date, a clear sense that employers are most motivated to adopt the Living Wage for either moral or business case considerations, or a mixture of the two, are further underlined. Through a survey of over 840 accredited Living Wage

Employers, and interviews with a wide variety of interrelated stakeholders, the authors demonstrate that “for many organisations, the key justification for signing up to this voluntary standard is values or mission-led” (Heery, Nash and Hann, p. 3), with the vast majority of employers indicating “that their decision to seek accreditation was the result of a desire to demonstrate that they are a socially responsible employer or more broadly to act in accordance with their core mission or aims” (ibid). As with Werner and Lim’s own findings, the primacy of moral motivations for accreditation are swiftly followed by more strategic business considerations:

Figure 5 Motivations for adoption of the Living Wage



Source: Heery, Nash and Hann, 2017, p. 9

In contrast to Werner and Lim, the divide between moral and business considerations is not as vast as it was within their findings: this may reflect the wider number of industries and different sizes of organisations surveyed by the authors, in contrast to the SME focus of Werner and Lim.

There is further validation that the reputational benefits of accreditation are a central argument for the existence of a “business case” for the Living Wage, although “improved recruitment and retention” as motivations are, perhaps surprisingly, lower down than may have been expected, considering the findings of both Werner and Lim and this thesis. The popularity of a primary motivation for accreditation being the recognition of staff contribution is an interesting finding, and can be seen as a hybrid between a moral and strategic argument for adoption: that it is ethically sound to ensure that workers are contributed fairly for their labour, and that they are more likely to work harder and stay with the employer for longer if they feel both valued and well compensated, through both receiving the Living Wage itself and the voluntary nature of employers in paying it. Finally, the findings of Werner and Lim are corroborated concerning the minimal influence of targeted local Living Wage campaigns in factoring in to the decision-making processes of employers when considering accreditation, with only 8 per cent of employers citing it as a motivation, again demonstrating the centrality of the Living Wage Foundation’s business-friendly approach to the campaign’s recent successes.

A limitation of Werner and Lim’s survey, in not including the option for specifying commercial and/or contractual self-interest as a survey option, is rectified here, with just below 20 per cent of employers citing this as a motivation. It is still difficult to ascertain, however, the validity of these responses, and whether the honest figure is much higher in reality. The authors note that “for some organizations, hard commercial considerations have underlain accreditation and this type of motive may become more significant in the future if public service procurement is used to diffuse the Living Wage” (ibid, p.11), as discussed in greater detail in chapter 6 of this thesis.

Finally, a further underlining of an issue discussed throughout this thesis, and in other literature within the area, is the finding that 46 per cent of employers placed as an issue of “great importance” that one of their primary motivations for accreditation was “the fact that they wanted to obtain recognition that they were already paying the Living Wage to their employees” (ibid). This further reflects the concern that the majority of employers most likely to be motivated enough to voluntarily adopt the Living Wage are also those who are most likely to already be paying decent wages and/or investing in their staff and corporate social responsibility strategies in a variety of other ways, as discussed in more detail in chapter 2 of this thesis.

One other study exploring employer motivations in some form is also of note here. In 2015, Coulson and Bonner conducted a qualitative study focused specifically on the business case for the Living Wage, applying a case study approach to examining the practical existence (or not) of such a case. In line with much of the other literature within the field, the authors find strong evidence of employers being motivated by strategic business considerations for accreditation, often alongside moral motivations rather than simply one or the other. The Director of Corporate Responsibility, Governance and Engagement for the British multinational insurance company Aviva, for example, is quoted within the report as arguing that “the upside was hugely beneficial to the employees affected, and the impact on costs was minimal. . . it was also the right thing to do” (Goddard, 2015).

From the literature within the field, then, it is clear that in terms of the individual motivations of employers for deciding to become accredited Living Wage Employers, based on the evidence to date it is the moral case, that it is “the right thing to do,” that motivates firms the most in signing up. This is followed swiftly by a recognition of the wider “business case” for adopting the Living Wage that organisations can enjoy through their voluntary and publicly-facing decision to do so, and that the reputational benefits of this decision are central to the strategic thinking of many employers. Finally, it is clear from the literature that the low ranking of local living wage campaigns as influencing the motivations of employers to accredit reflects the transition by the Living Wage movement away from a strategy of targeted public protests against specific targets as a means of applying pressure on employers into paying higher wages, and towards the centrality of a more business-friendly approach, exemplified by the professional accreditation body status of the Living Wage Foundation.

3.5. The organisational impact of the Living Wage

Within the literature base to date, there have been a series of studies on the impact of Living Wage adoption on the individual organisations that have implemented the measure, and become accredited Living Wage Employers with the movement.

In their empirical study of a series of employers adopting the London Living Wage, Lineker and Wills (2016) reported a number of key findings on the organisational impact of implementation, both for firms and for workers themselves. Among these were the strong variation in the implementation strategies pursued by firms in order to absorb the higher wage bill costs of

becoming a Living Wage Employer. These included, but were not limited to, employers cutting jobs to offset the cost of higher wages; reduced profit across the board for the firm; reductions in hours for a number of workers paid at Living Wage rates of pay; and the successful strategy of one employer adopting the measure to also persuade their own subcontractors to adopt the measure. Of all the employers studied, only one demonstrated a net savings in employee turnover rates, of 0.4 per cent.

In terms of the impact on workers, a transition to the Living Wage:

Was found to be having a more positive impact on workplace experiences than on finances and family life, with 54% of workers reporting benefits to their working life. Other benefits were lower, with a minority (38%) reporting financial benefits and just a third (32%) reporting benefits to family life. Measures of benefit intensity showed that cumulatively 65% of workers in LW workplaces experienced one or more dimension of benefit, 38% reported two or more dimensions of benefit and 21% reported benefits in all three areas, work, family and finances. Some 35% of respondents experienced no reported benefits from the Living Wage.

(Lineker and Wills, 2016, p. 770)

Crucially, in terms of the impact on workers and an ambition to reduce in-work poverty rates, “the reported impact of the Living Wage on reducing in-work poverty was limited for most of the workers affected” (ibid., p. 772). This was because in many of the organisations within which this research was conducted, hours of work were also reduced in line with the uprating of hourly rates of pay:

In precise like with like jobs hours comparisons, within and between workplaces, Living Wage jobs would increase incomes . . . workers complained that the implementation of the LW had been associated with a cut in their full-time hours, reduced overtime and the consolidation of the bonus payment, all of which undermined the impact of the LLW rate. As this worker said: ‘Because they cut the bonus and the hours, I don’t have more money than before.’”

(ibid)

These findings demonstrate two of the key wider arguments of this thesis: that increases in hourly rates of pay are not an all-in-one solution to the issue of in-work poverty, and that the interplay between wider parameters of insecure and precarious jobs and working conditions, in this case a lack of hours despite receiving a higher rate of pay, must also be acknowledged and tackled in successfully protecting workers in an effective manner. These findings also validate the Living Wage Foundation's recent move towards a wider decent work agenda with the launch of their "Living Hours" accreditation scheme, discussed more in chapter 8 of this thesis.

In the 2016 study of Werner and Lim, discussed in more detail above, the authors place a key emphasis on the impact of implementation of the Living Wage on SMEs, utilising a mixed methods approach to better understand the experiences of those that have become accredited. The authors note that:

Whilst the spotlight in recent years has largely been on large Living Wage employers (corporations and public sector institutions), very little is known about the operational and strategic decisions made about the Living Wage by SMEs. This is despite the fact that SMEs make up over half of the 2,800 employers who have signed up voluntarily to pay the Living Wage and, further, that 99.9% of all private sector businesses are SMEs, employing more than 15.6 million workers. As such, SMEs have a potentially important role to play in promoting the Living Wage in the UK economy.

(Werner and Lim, 2016, p. 4)

This thesis shares this acknowledgement of this gap in the existing literature, and significantly contributes to closing this gap through the case study experiences of SMEs in the construction and hospitality sectors who have adopted the Living Wage, analysed and discussed in greater detail in chapters 5, 6 and 7 of this thesis. Within their study, Werner and Lim report widespread acknowledgement and acceptance from employers of the organisational benefits that come with implementation of the Living Wage, with net benefits in reducing staff turnover, raising employee motivation and productivity, and the ability to attract a higher quality of candidates at interview stage. These are all themes raised in interviews with employers for this project, too, and which are discussed in greater detail in chapter 5 of this thesis. The differences between these findings and those of Lineker and Wills may again come down to the SME nature of the

firms under consideration by Werner and Lim, and the public sector employers and universities under consideration by Lineker and Wills.

In terms of the most challenging aspects in the successful implementation of the Living Wage by SMEs, the most commonly voiced concerns revolve around “planning to accommodate annual rises in the Living Wage and, linked to this, maintaining pay differentials across the whole of the organisation” (ibid., p. 5). These are themes which were also raised consistently in interviews with employers for this thesis, and which are presented and analysed in chapters 5 and 8 as both employer concerns, and larger criticisms of the Living Wage Foundation’s accreditation model itself.

Werner and Lim also found that “more than half of the Living Wage SMEs surveyed already paid the Living Wage rate or above to all or most of their staff prior to accreditation, an indication that many SMEs would find it easy to get accredited” (ibid., p. 4). This speaks to some of the wider discussion points raised throughout this thesis, namely that the Living Wage campaign as it currently stands is not attracting the employers whose accreditation would make the most difference to the widest number of workers, for example in traditionally low-paying sectors such as retail, hospitality, and cleaning.

Within Heery, Nash and Hann’s 2017 research on the experiences of accredited Living Wage Employers, again discussed above with regards to employer motivations, a series of varied organisational impacts were reported. The authors tested three main types of associated change, namely whether the Living Wage had led to an upgrading of HR practice, stimulating a wider set of changes that improved workforce management; whether negative adjustments had flowed from accreditation, in terms of job losses, restricting employment employer growth, or prices increases for consumers; and whether the extra cost of an employer’s wage bill flowing from Living Wage accreditation had led to the “clawing back” of these costs through reduced hours for workers, or the removal of other staff benefits.

The latter two more negative consequences, seen more vividly in the research of Lineker and Wills (2016) discussed above, were largely absent in the findings of Heery, Nash and Hann. The authors reported that:

The most striking finding is that only one associated change is reported by a majority of Living Wage employers: 70 per cent of employers stated that they had “absorbed the cost of the Living Wage without making major changes.” On this evidence, the catalytic effect of the Living Wage has been limited, affecting only a minority of accredited employers. Most who have sought accreditation have taken it in their stride, increasing pay for the often-small number of workers affected without having to make wider adjustments.

(Heery, Nash and Hann, 2017, p. 20)

This is in stark contrast to the more detrimental findings reported by Lineker and Wills, demonstrating that it may be the case that employers that suffer most with the challenges of adopting the Living Wage are more likely to be within the public sector, or part of the UK’s higher education landscape. The more positive findings of Heery, Nash and Hann may also reflect the wider make-up of the larger Living Wage Foundation accreditation network, in which the majority of employers are already likely to be paying their employees well before becoming accredited.

Regardless, it is clear, then, that the organisational impact of the Living Wage extends beyond a one-size-fits-all story of net gains for both employer and employee following implementation. Each case is different, depending on the decisions made by the organisation as to how to absorb the cost of the higher wage bill of becoming a Living Wage Employer, and decisions which in and of themselves are impacted by the specific sectoral and financial considerations of each individual firm.

3.6. The UK Living Wage campaign

Within the literature focused upon the Living Wage campaign itself, there is a greater emphasis placed on furthering theoretical discussions surrounding the movement, rather than the empirical implications of the Living Wage for employers and low-paid workers across the UK labour market discussed in greater detail above. Within this strand of the literature, two clear trends emerge. The first is a chief interest among scholars of what the emergence and evolution of the Living Wage movement says about the changing role of both civil society actors and traditional trade unions, as civil society stakeholders become more influential within the world of work, and more prevalent within the industrial relations landscape more widely. The second is a focus on

conceptualising the emergence of the UK Living Wage campaign as a key example in the rise of civil regulation as means of enforcing higher standards within labour markets both across Britain, and, more widely, across global supply chains. Both will be explored in greater detail below. There are also a small number of papers which are more focused on a critical examination of the impact of the campaign itself to date: these will also be discussed, and important findings of relevance to this thesis identified.

This focus within the literature concerning the more recent years of the UK Living Wage movement, and the greater emphasis on discussion and analysis of the wider formulation of Citizens UK as a civil society actor rather than on the specific operational activities of the campaign itself (particularly of the work of the Living Wage Foundation), is a notable gap within the existing literature base. This is one key area where this project seeks to make a significant contribution, particularly in the insights and analysis discussed in greater detail in chapter 8 of this thesis of the role of the Living Wage Foundation and its accreditation network model, and the body's evolution and expansion from a solitary focus on hourly rates of pay to a greater acknowledgement of the wider causes of indecent work standards within the UK, an aspect not yet covered by any other academic literature.

While this section of the literature base is underdeveloped, then, there are two particular papers that do explore the more recent years of the movement that it would be negligent to not discuss within this review. Heery, Nash, and Hann (2017a), for example, present an account through the lens of viewing the campaign as a primary example of effective civil regulation. They explore the development of the movement through a wide variety of actors within and tangentially involved with its activities, with “the interview net deliberately cast widely to identify a range of perspectives upon and experiences of the campaign” (2017, p. 803), acknowledging and identifying the comprehensive range of stakeholders involved in some form with the UK Living Wage. Through their research, the authors conclude that:

The Living Wage is a notable example of the civil regulation of the employment relationship and forms part of a growing trend for private, voluntary forms of regulation to supplement more traditional methods derived from collective bargaining and the use of law.

ibid., p. 810

They also note the broad variety of actors involved in the movement, and the broad range of methods utilised in campaigning for the Living Wage to date. They argue that the campaign has “registered considerable success” (ibid), with more than 100,000 workers receiving the Living Wage since 2001, and predict that such success will continue based on the movement’s current trajectory. Finally, and in league with some of the central findings of this thesis, they argue that:

The Living Wage campaign has generated ripple effects, influencing the substance of traditional methods of employment regulation through law and collective bargaining. Its impact attests both to the significance of civil regulation within contemporary employment relations and to the hybridization of regulatory forms.

(ibid., p. 812)

The ripple effects of the Living Wage, particularly of the wider impact of accreditation on the subcontracted employment relationships of accrediting employers, are discussed more in chapters 5, 6 and 7 of this thesis. The argument that the campaign demonstrates the “hybridization of regulatory forms” now active across the employment landscape of Britain also finds favour with the conclusions of this thesis, and is a particular focus of chapter 6.

There are a number of methodological and empirically-centred similarities between the central considerations of this thesis and the work of Heery, Nash and Hann. This includes the focus on the wider variety of actors that constitute and interact with the Living Wage campaign, in line with the theoretical framework of this thesis which views the movement through the lens of stakeholder theory; the utilisation of interviews with Living Wage campaigners, alongside the attendance of campaign movements, events, and meetings; and an exploration of the motivations of individual employers for their reasoning in becoming Living Wage Employers. Where the similarities end, however, concerns the in-depth exploration of this thesis with regards to the reasoning of the three primary case study employers as to their motivations for adopting the Living Wage, as well as the project’s wider focus on the impact on workers themselves of these decisions.

The final difference is one simply of time, with data collection for this study occurring later and placing a primary emphasis on the evolution of the Living Wage Foundation from an actor focused upon one key aspect of campaigning (raising hourly rates of pay), to a transition into an

institution which acknowledges and also campaigns on the wider root causes of in-work poverty and precarious forms of employment within Britain (discussed more in chapter 8), a process which developed during the time this research was conducted. Nevertheless, of the existing UK Living Wage literature within the field, it is the work of Heery, Nash, and Hann that this study most closely resembles, and where this thesis places itself in terms of contributing to and extending existing understanding and knowledge.

One other notable paper in recent years is that of Johnson, Koukiadaki, and Grimshaw (2019), and their critical analysis of the “mixed fortunes” of the Living Wage campaign since its emergence in 2001, and the near-two-decades it has been in operation since then. The authors place an emphasis on the role of the Living Wage as just one type of a wider set of wage-setting instruments currently operating within the UK labour market, and are more critical of the movement’s impact and success in raising the wage rates of a significant number of low-paid workers than Heery, Nash and Hann are. The central argument advanced by the authors is that:

The UK case demonstrates that a living wage is not a sufficient factor in the absence of both a coordinated approach for universal implementation and linkages with effective collective bargaining . . . and while employers increasingly perceive voluntary accreditation with the Living Wage Foundation as an important symbol of ‘business ethics’, the Living Wage remains a relatively isolated wage-setting instrument in the UK.

(Johnson, Koukiadaki, and Grimshaw, 2019, p. 319)

The authors conclude that the perceived limited success of the campaign’s efforts to date lie in both the voluntary nature of its accreditation model, but also because of “the limited scope for direct interaction with other wage-setting mechanisms in the UK,” most specifically in terms of involvement with collective bargaining efforts at both sectoral and national levels. In contrast to the approach of Heery, Nash and Hann, they are quicker to discuss the limitations of a civil regulatory approach (or “soft regulation,” as they refer to the concept) in raising the wages of low-paid workers, and propose a series of viable alternatives to such a framework. These include the raising of legal national minimum wage rates to the level of the voluntary Living Wage, and the reintroduction of wage councils for separate sectors, which they hope would:

Establish a more participative mechanism to protect low-wage workers, facilitating collective voice over the choice to introduce a living wage and negotiation over how to preserve wage differentials in response to a rising base wage rate.

(ibid.)

The authors also suggest the diffusion of the Living Wage through the utilisation of the public procurement system, and tying the granting of public contracts to those employers who agree to pay these higher rates of pay. These are issues discussed in more detail in chapter 6 of this thesis.

To summarise, Johnson, Koukiadaki, and Grimshaw's critical analysis of the UK Living Wage movement's development and impact on the UK labour market draws together a large number of disparate themes, and to date remains the most critical piece within the wider literature on the limitations of the campaign's efforts. Given that the author's criticisms of a lack of impact are less to do with capacity and more to do with the inherent voluntarist model of the accreditation model, it is unlikely that the movement itself could ever fully address these criticisms. There is a small degree of overlap of the criticisms of their paper with the limitations of the campaign discussed more widely in chapter 8 of this thesis, although this study remains more optimistic about the future success of the campaign than Johnson, Koukiadaki, and Grimshaw are, particularly as it continues to broaden its focus to the wider causes of in-work poverty through its transition to a larger decent work agenda. Nevertheless, the analysis and conclusions which are the focus of chapter 8 also seek to contribute to ongoing debates and instil a wider understanding within the literature of many of the issues raised within this paper.

3.7. The UK Living Wage campaign: one stakeholder within a wider struggle

Much of the academic literature around the early years of the Living Wage campaign placed a high emphasis on the tensions and challenges for civil society actors and established trade unions to succeed in convincing employers to adopt the Living Wage, and for those actors and stakeholders behind the movement to work effectively together to enable this to happen. A significant proportion of this work focused on advancing the wider debates surrounding the concept of "community unionism," defined most simply as describing "a whole series of ways that unions work with communities and community organisations over issues of interest to either

or both” (Lipsig-Mumme, 2003, p.1). Stewart et al (2009) give a broader explanation of what the term encompasses, in recognition of the evolution of the term over time:

Now a global debate addressing local exemplars, discussion of the future of what has been termed ‘Community Unionism’ traverses a range of disciplines, including geography, sociology and of course, industrial relations. For trade unions, it is perceived as important in terms of organising and recruiting but with a particular concern with the importance of community influences.

(Stewart et al, 2009, p. 3)

Given the community-focused emergence of the Citizens UK Living Wage campaign and its goal of winning higher wages and better working conditions for low-paid workers, then, it seems logical that any discussion of the role of the campaign would also involve discussion and debate surrounding the concept of community unionism. Beyond the UK-based Living Wage movement, Luce (2005) has examined in particular the tensions and interplay between Living Wage campaigners and trade unions, warning that “not all union leaders are convinced of the opportunities for translating living-wage campaigns into new organizing. . . In fact, some assert that the campaigns hurt organizing efforts.” Holgate (2009, p. 50) explored this theme further in terms of the tensions within the UK Living Wage campaign and traditional British trade unions, stating that “the association between London Citizens and the trade unions has been likened to the early stage of a troubled personal relationship – sometimes on and sometimes off – with each party criticising the other.” Others have noted how trade unions have sometimes conducted their own living wage campaigns independently of the “main” campaign, in recognition of the tensions and challenges between the two actors (Prowse and Fells, 2016).

Despite these tensions and challenges in working together, the potential opportunities for civil society actors and trade unions to succeed through alliances has yielded a number of positive developments, too. It is often forgotten, for example, that the Living Wage campaign first emerged through crucial support from traditional trade unions. The Unison Family Unit, a research unit set up by the trade union Unison to conduct research on the impact of low wages and poor working conditions on their members, were the first body to be entrusted with the calculation of the specific rate that the Citizens UK Living Wage movement would originally campaign for (Wills, 2001). Similarly, it was trade unions that were the campaign’s initial

partners in their first successes, securing the Living Wage for low-paid, outsourced workers in hospitals across the four boroughs of East London (Jameson, 2018).

Additionally, Prowse and Fells (2016) also discuss the complexity in awarding Citizens UK and the Living Wage Foundation sole “victory” for the existing number of accredited Living Wage Employers within the movement’s network. As discussed in greater detail in chapter 2, there are almost always a number of locally-led campaigns for the Living Wage in operation within the UK at any given moment: some instigated by local Citizens UK chapters, some by new, grassroots-led trade unions like United Voices of the World or the Independent Workers’ Union of Great Britain, some by other ethically-motivated employers, and some by traditional trade unions themselves. Given this, Prowse and Fells argue in their 2016 study of eleven separate trade union campaigns for the Living Wage that responsibility for such victories lies with a wider variety of stakeholders than may be apparent from the communications of the Living Wage campaign itself:

It is less clear whether these [Living Wage] increases flowed from employers’ decision to accredit with the Foundation or as a result of a community or union campaign. (A further difficulty with estimating the impact is that an employer can commit to being a ‘living wage employer’ but, if all their employees are already paid at or above the living wage, the commitment would have had no immediate effect on pay packets).

(Prowse and Fells, 2016)

Beyond solitary campaigns themselves, a number of the newly-established decent work accreditation schemes across the UK launched in recent years (discussed more in chapter 2 of this thesis) also have “accreditation with the Living Wage Foundation” as one of their primary conditions for membership, thus creating a series of near-permanent opportunities for the Foundation to add more employers to its accreditation network without any campaigning or promotion of the Living Wage on its own part. Examining the lessons derived from over 130 living wage campaigns across the world, Luce (2005) concludes that it takes a wide breath of different actors to work together to fight for decent working standards on a regional, national or international basis, in this case in the fight for higher wages for low-paid workers:

The real contribution of the living-wage movement for labour comes in the form of lessons learned from 10 years of organizing. Living-wage campaigns usually win, but the campaigns are often hard fought. The organizing that is required to get the ordinances passed and enforced is an amalgamation of the best practices of community, faith-based, and labour organizations.

(Luce, 2005)

These findings reflect how the priorities and objectives of trade unions and Living Wage campaigners may sometimes be at odds with each other, with the potential for the singular focus of achieving higher wages for low-paid workers to clash with the more expansive remit of trade unions to protect all workers, and raise wider working conditions. For example, an employer could utilise a publicly-recognised “Living Wage Employer” accreditation label as a means of appearing strong on business ethics and working conditions with regards to their public image, but continue to facilitate less decent work standards in other areas: for instance, by employing workers on insecure contracts; operating unsafe working conditions; employing workers on fewer hours; or attempting to exempt interns from receiving Living Wage rates of pay. Other, more parochial interests may also be a source of tension, such as a trade union’s desire to retain a large membership base, or act as the sole representative actor for the interests of low-paid workers within a certain sector or workplace. For example, a Unison guide for local representatives to organise their own living wage campaigns also contains the guidance that:

Always keep in mind that a Living Wage campaign is a great way to recruit new members to the union. Ensure your campaign includes non-members as much as possible, showing them that UNISON is on their side and fighting for their interests.

(Unison, 2015, p. 8)

These tensions and power dynamics between civil society and industrial relations actors with competing interests are discussed in greater detail in chapter 8, through an analysis of the insights derived from fieldwork interviews for this thesis.

Despite the challenges between trade unions and civil society actors working together in relative harmony, then, it is important not to understate the considerable impact that the broad-based, community-driven coalition that forms Citizens UK has had on altering both the perception and

the practice of what civil society organisations could achieve across the UK labour market, and the wider political and socioeconomic changes that could be influenced by community organising movements across the industrial relations landscape. Holgate (2015, p.4.35) also credits the movement and the success of the Living Wage campaign in particular with “the instigation of a wider debate on and developments around community organising in the UK,” and the inspiration behind a great deal of soul-searching among traditional trade unions on their future purpose (ibid).

Holgate (2015) has also discussed the various strategies and approaches attempted by trade unions in recent years to engage more broadly with community organising as a broader-based alternative to how unions have traditionally operated, arguing that as a result of the continued development of community unionism in both Britain and abroad, “unions are in the process of starting to rethink their purpose” (p. 434). She identifies a number of key motivations for these decisions to reinvent and renew, including the declining power of unions at the point of production, and a desire “to rebuild the links that were so important to the origins and development of trade unionism” (ibid). However, the existence and rapid success of the Citizens UK Living Wage campaign from 2001 to 2015 is also highlighted as a primary factor in the strategic thinking of trade unions in how to reinvent themselves, with Holgate arguing that:

This approach is largely motivated by three things: the success of the broad-based community organisation London Citizens, and its high-profile campaign for a living wage (Wills, 2004, 2009a); local and national politicians noticing how this organisation is able to mobilise local people around community activity; and third, unions and political parties waking up to the potential for growth within their own organisations.

(ibid)

Heery, Nash and Hann (2017b) have also emphasised the wide diversity of actors and stakeholders involved within the wider Living Wage movement, arguing that “while Citizens might be regarded as a “non-worker” organization, it is a representative body and has drawn an array of civil society organizations into the campaign” (2017, p. 812). Similarly:

The campaign has involved a variety of other actors, connected through partnerships, alliances, and contracts, though also sometimes acting independently. The campaign

displays the networked quality that is said to characterize civil society organizations. The participants in this network include other civil society organizations but, crucially, also include traditional actors: trade unions, employers and government. It is the wide range of participating actors that is one of the most striking features of the campaign.

(ibid, p. 812)

This is in line with the stakeholder theory perspective of this thesis, in which it is argued that what is typically referred to as “the Living Wage campaign” consists of a vast array of disparate actors and stakeholders, across the civil society, employment, and industrial relations landscape (not to mention state actors promoting and facilitating adoption of the Living Wage, from local authorities across the UK to the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly).

As befits a study with a theoretical framework informed by stakeholder theory, then, one of the key arguments of this thesis is that the “Living Wage movement” is larger than Citizens UK and the Living Wage Foundation themselves, although these remain the two most prominent actors within the movement which are the central focus of this study. These stakeholders include but are not limited to many of the actors discussed above, including traditional trade unions, the non-affiliated living wage accreditation schemes of cities like Oxford and regions like Brighton and Hove (discussed more in chapter 2), community groups affiliated with Citizens UK, and independent living wage campaigns which have accreditation with the Living Wage Foundation as one of their central goals. While this section has outlined the ongoing debates within the wider literature surrounding the Living Wage movement as a civil society actor in reference to its relationship with traditional trade unions, then, the next section discusses its increasingly important role as a non-state actor helping to facilitate a civil regulatory framework for a core component of the UK labour market (namely the regulation of wages and the incidence of low pay).

3.8. The Living Wage campaign as civil regulator

Beyond the debate outlined above concerning community unionism and the relationship between civil society actors and industrial relations actors, another key focus of the literature surrounding the theoretical implications of the UK Living Wage have been focused on exploring the movement’s significance as a primary example of what Williams, Heery, and Abbott (2011,

p.951) term the “emerging regime of civil regulation in work and employment relations.” Sometimes referred to as “private regulation” (Bartley, 2007), civil regulation is most simply defined as “those pressures exerted by processes in civil society to persuade, or even compel, organisations to act differently in relation to social and environmental concerns” (Bendell, 2000). As discussed in previous chapters of this thesis, the formulation of civil regulation, and the models which enable it to be effective in the voluntary oversight of new standards and norms across the labour market, are often the result of a failure of legal regulatory frameworks to enforce good behaviour in an effective manner (or indeed the failure of such frameworks to exist at all).

Among others, Heery, Hann and Nash (2017) have argued that:

The Living Wage is a notable example of the civil regulation of the employment relationship and forms part of a growing trend for private, voluntary forms of regulation to supplement more traditional methods derived from collective bargaining and the use of law.

(Heery, Hann and Nash, 2017, p. 812)

The authors also argue that the practical and symbolic example of the campaign has generated “ripple effects” of civil regulation within other areas of public and private employer regulation, too. This can be seen in the recent proliferation of “good work standards” across the UK, typically facilitated by public sector actors such as the Mayor of London, or in the case of the Brighton and Hove living wage campaign, organised and run by a hybrid of council and local business representatives.

Given the involvement of state actors such as local authorities and devolved institutions in the construction and facilitation of civil regulatory frameworks, then, it is also important to note that state actors themselves can also be involved in civil regulatory efforts beyond their enforcement of legal boundaries and standards. To take one example, Cardiff City Council have since 2015 been funding a “Living Wage Accreditation Support Scheme,” in which they offer to pay the Living Wage Foundation accreditation fees (paid to the body by all accrediting employers as a condition of becoming part of the network) on behalf of any and all businesses within the greater Cardiff region who agree to become a Living Wage Employer (Cardiff City Council, 2020). At

the time of the launch the Leader of the Council, Phil Bale, explained the thinking behind this decision as:

As part of our own Living Wage accreditation, we have committed to working closely with businesses in the city to encourage them also to pay the Living Wage and £50,000 is now available to support businesses who gain their own accreditation. We want to make sure that no no-one should have to do a day's work for less than they can live on and even those on the lowest pay can cover their basic needs.

(Bale, 2015)

There is a long history within the civil regulation literature discussing the role and impact of voluntary forms of accreditation schemes aimed at the improvement of wages and wider working standards within organisations, and a debate that continues today. This has been seen most recently, and most pertinently for this thesis, in the recent emergence of a wide number of accreditation models facilitated by a variety of stakeholders as a means of enforcing a voluntary-based oversight regime surrounding the decent work agenda, discussed more both above and in chapter 2.

Hoque's 2003 research into the voluntary adoption of the "Investors in People" (IiP) award by individual employers, and the subsequent organisational impacts of these decisions, present an interesting parallel with the focus of this thesis. Discussing the internal dynamics of employers considering the decision to accredit, for example, Hoque finds that some decision-makers "displayed cynicism towards them, and they were neither familiar nor comfortable with the process" (2003, p.546), reiterating the importance of influential internal supporters within an organisation in raising the likelihood of an employer voluntarily adopting a form of civil regulation (discussed in greater detail in chapter 5). He also finds that following accreditation, employers had been able to more closely tie their training activity to the firm's wider business strategies, a benefit of accreditation also reported by accredited Living Wage Employers, particularly in terms of the reputational benefits of accepting a voluntary ethical standard in a public-facing way (Heery, Nash and Hann, 2017).

However, some of the persistent criticisms of the Living Wage movement and its accreditation model also find parallels in Hoque's findings. Hoque finds that "small businesses are less likely

to have secured IiP accreditation, though they argue that they see the business benefits from it earlier” (ibid, p. 546). This is a reversal of the existing nature of the Living Wage Foundation’s own accreditation network, in which the vast majority of accredited employers are typically small and medium-sized enterprises, and for whom the complexities of accreditation are far less onerous than for large employers with a multitude of subcontractor and supply chain contracts to negotiate (to take one example). Related to this, Hoque reiterates one of the key criticisms that have been voiced about the overall impact of the UK Living Wage movement across the UK, namely:

While training and development practice may well be better in accredited firms than in non-accredited firms, the impact of IiP itself has been limited. This is because some firms have used it to gain recognition for existing good practice, with few changes being necessary in order to secure accreditation.

(ibid, p. 546)

This is an issue that is, perhaps inevitably, true of all civil regulatory frameworks designed to lift standards among employers in a voluntary manner: that the organisations most likely to become part of such a network are those that are already aware and accepting of the arguments behind them, and most likely to already have some high-quality workplace-based schemes in place of some form or another. This was discussed in more detail in the previous chapter of this thesis, utilising the accredited Living Wage Employer Brewdog and their “pawternity leave” policy for employees, along with their abolition of zero-hour contracts upon their accreditation with the Living Wage Foundation. This tendency for more ethically-led employers to more readily join voluntary workplace improvement accreditation schemes underlines the need for the facilitators of such schemes to better communicate the strategic business benefits of accreditation to more sceptical employers, then, for whom the moral arguments for doing so are not enough of a reason to voluntarily take actions such as implementing the UK Living Wage. These are issues discussed in greater detail in chapters 5 and 8 of this thesis.

Hoque also found that the voluntary adoption and accreditation of the IiP award by individual employers was uneven across different sectors of the economy (ibid., p. 546) and thus less effective in raising wider standards than it could have otherwise been, a criticism that has also

been levelled at the Living Wage Foundation's own accreditation network (Johnson, Koukiadaki, and Grimshaw, 2019). This is an issue discussed in greater detail in chapter 8 of this thesis.

3.9. The retreating regulatory framework of the state

While the relaxed regulatory approach from the British state towards the UK labour market is most dramatically exemplified by its current failure to effectively tackle low wages and precarious forms of work across the employment landscape, discussed more in chapter 2, Hoque reminds us that a “voluntarist, *laissez faire* approach” (2003, p. 544) towards labour market regulation has long been a typical characteristic of successive UK governments in recent decades. Hoque raises the example of the New Labour government's decision prior to the May 1997 general election in dropping its commitment to a compulsory training levy, under which individual employers would have been legally obligated to pay a levy as a percentage of their payroll if it was decided that they had not sufficiently invested in skills training opportunities for their employees. Hoque also explains that persistent criticisms of this hands-off approach had also been raised with regards to the relaxed regulatory strategies of the Thatcher and Major governments, too, and that these successive efforts had by the turn of the century left the UK within what Finegold and Soskice describe as a “low skills equilibrium, in which the majority of enterprises staffed by poorly trained managers and workers produce low-quality goods and services” (1988, p. 22), without a legally enforceable regulatory framework in place to raise and maintain higher standards.

This is an example that reiterates one of the wider arguments of this thesis. It can be argued that the same slow erosion of skills training standards discussed above can also be seen throughout this thesis, concerning the slow erosion over time of financially adequate legal minimum wage rates that match the cost of living in the UK, and the development of increasingly insecure and precarious forms of employment without the regulatory oversight to prevent their creation and subsequent proliferation: and, once this state of affairs is established, the emergence of new civil society actors and numerous other stakeholders within the industrial relations landscape which seek to create a civil regulatory framework to rectify these failures of legally-binding labour regulatory standards.

This further underlines the stakeholder theory perspective being utilised as a theoretical framework for this thesis: that the UK Living Wage movement is but one stakeholder in a wider

labour market and industrial relations landscape, and whose very emergence as a campaign was a direct response to the failure of other stakeholders in holding successive governments and individual employers to account for their wage and working practices policies.

The following two sections of this review utilise the emergence of the gig economy as a means of illustrating the changing nature and norms of the employment and industrial relations landscapes that the UK Living Wage movement operates within. These discussions are in line with the theoretical framework of this thesis, in which stakeholder theory is employed as a lens through which to understand both the campaign for the Living Wage, and the wider ecosystem that helps to inform and shape the campaign's actions and own development.

3.10. The emergence of the gig economy: a new challenge for regulatory oversight

One of the primary causes of the rise of the decent work agenda, and a new and problematic challenge for state and civil regulators, is the emergence of the gig economy, which has led to the increasing fragmentation of work through the creation of new, non-standard forms of employment that exacerbate the risk of an individual not being in a position to earn an income that enables them to afford a decent standard of living (and, if they can, whether they can do so on a consistent basis). Weil (2014) has labelled this increasing fragmentation as the “fissuring” of work, with the employment landscape increasingly characterised by “extreme flexibility, the shifting of risks to workers, and income instability” (2014, p. 36).

De Stefano has argued that while such working conditions are most keenly felt and experienced within the gig economy, they “have long become a reality for a portion of the workforce in current labour markets that goes far beyond the persons employed in the gig economy” (2016, p. 481), something that can be seen in many of the new and precarious forms of insecure work discussed in chapter 2 of this thesis, including the misclassification of workers as self-employed, and the rapid rise within the UK labour market of zero-hour contracts. Kaine and Josserand (2019) argue that:

Regardless of its actual scope, the development of the gig economy has provoked intense debate about its impact on the experience of work and labour standards, both for those undertaking gig work and for those with more traditional jobs that might be undermined by new, unregulated labour market participants.

(Kaine and Josserand, 2019)

In much the same way as the Living Wage movement and other stakeholders have sought to set down a civil regulatory framework to voluntarily govern the implementation of higher wages within the UK labour market more generally, imposing such a framework on the gig economy is still a problem without a solution. Stewart and Stanford have argued that regulators and policymakers “should consider how to strengthen and expand the regulatory framework governing gig work” (2017, p. 420), both for the sake of gig economy workers themselves, and to help set down some oversights on the emergence of such working conditions within the wider employment landscape:

It is vital that policymakers recognise the challenges posed by the expansion of the gig economy to the existing regime of labour regulation – a regime which is already under pressure from the expansion of other forms of non-standard, contingent and nominally independent work.

(ibid, p. 431)

In contrast, Graham, Hjorth, and Lehdonvirta (2017) have argued that beyond legal regulatory solutions, there could also be a case for civil regulatory accreditation models as a means of effectively raising and maintaining higher standards of pay and working conditions within the gig economy:

Strategies of consumer watchdogs, certification schemes, and activist organisations could be emulated and applied to the contexts of digital work. The International Association of Outsourcing Professionals (IAOP) could, for instance, update its ethical standards to be more in line with the worker protections needed in a digital economy. An organisation could also be established to certify that core ILO labour standards are obtained . . .but also that workers are paid a living wage.

(Graham, Hjorth, and Lehdonvirta, 2017, p. 154)

These discussions within the literature on the current absence of effective regulatory oversight of the gig economy, and the challenges of constructing and establishing new frameworks that can successfully prevent the continued erosion of income security and increasingly precarious working conditions both within the gig economy and the wider labour market, demonstrate the

challenges that the UK Living Wage movement and other stakeholders invested in the decent work agenda face. It may yet be the case that while the Living Wage Foundation's accreditation guidelines are in theory an effective civil regulatory safeguard against insecure forms of work, as the wider economic landscape evolves and the precarity of work becomes more prevalent this may change dramatically. With the Living Wage Foundation's launch of the "Living Hours" accreditation scheme, discussed more in chapter 8 of this thesis, the Foundation's evolution into a body with a wider scope than the regulation of hourly rates of pay demonstrate that it is aware of these challenges moving forward, and the shifting employment landscape within which it operates. Nevertheless, there continues to be a complex and multi-faceted debate within the decent work literature on the new regulatory challenges that will need to be faced, as this landscape continues to evolve.

3.11. The emergence of the gig economy: a challenge (or opportunity) for trade unions

Beyond the regulatory challenges of the emergence of the gig economy, the non-standard forms of employment being created as a result of its rise also pose challenges for trade unions in effectively representing and providing a voice for workers (International Labour Organisation, 2016; Trades Union Congress, 2017; Page-Tickell and Ritchie, 2020). While there is little scope to discuss the intricacies of such developments within this thesis, the advent of the gig economy has seen a multitude of new forms of worker organisation and the formation of irregular models of worker resistance emerge (Wood et al, 2019; Anwar and Graham, 2019; Ravenelle, 2019), while also increasing the likelihood that the traditional trade union model of worker protection and representation is no longer viable as an effective means of challenging low wages and poor working conditions.

Page-Tickell and Ritchie have argued strongly that trade unions have created a rod for their own backs within this area, arguing that "the trade union movement has until recently neglected to engage with the issues that these workers are facing and so has denied its own roots" (Page-Tickell and Ritchie, 2020, p. 63), precipitating the very same new forms of organisation and collective voice among workers within the gig economy referred to above. Farrar (2019) has similarly argued that "the bigger problem is unions' continued focus on traditional employees over "precarious" workers, where the opportunity to make a bigger difference as a union perhaps lies."

Others, however, have been more positive. Muller-Heyndy (2019), for example, argues that a 2019 deal between the courier company Hermes and the GMB union demonstrates a way forward for how traditional trade unions can operate within the gig economy. The deal, in which workers previously classified as self-employed have the option of a “self-employed-plus” status which includes holiday pay and guaranteed hourly pay rates of at least £8.55 an hour, also includes the acceptance by Hermes of a voluntary recognition agreement with GMB as officially representing the interests of “self-employed” workers within the Hermes organisation. O’Connor has argued that the deal suggests a move towards a Scandinavian model for trade unions within the gig economy, arguing:

[The deal] looks like a shift towards a more Scandinavian model, which relies less on employment laws to protect workers than on negotiations between employers and unions. Countries such as Sweden and Denmark have no legal national minimum wage, because wage floors are set by collective agreements.

(O’Connor, 2019)

Others have criticised the arrangement, however, arguing that anything less than established worker status is a concession to employers facilitating the continued proliferation of insecure and precarious standards of employment (Farrar, 2019). It remains the case, then, that trade unions are still finding their future role within the gig economy, and debate and discussion within the literature will continue so long as this economic landscape continues to shift in such dramatic ways.

The above two sections, exploring the debates and discussions within the literature of the regulatory challenges of the gig economy, and the changing role of trade unions as these considerable changes to the organisation of work continue, are included in this literature review to illustrate the wider evolution of the employment landscape as an ecosystem that the Living Wage campaign operates within. As the gig economy inspires the creation of increasingly insecure and precarious forms of work in the wider UK labour market, the Living Wage Foundation may have to change its current model of civil regulatory oversight to reflect these changes, in order to better protect workers entitled to being paid the UK Living Wage: similarly, as the role of trade unions continues to develop and evolve within this new landscape, both Citizens UK and the Living Wage Foundation may find new ways to work in tandem with these

reformed and/or new industrial relations actors, to ensure that there is “join up” between different stakeholders in fighting for better wages and decent working conditions for a larger number of workers. Such changes may also enable the Living Wage movement to find new ways of raising the representation and involvement of workers within the campaign, an issue (and current criticism of the campaign) discussed in greater detail in chapter 8 of this thesis.

3.12. Concluding remarks

The insights derived from this review of the literature have helped situate this thesis in the existing academic literature base which this project seeks to contribute to, namely the study of the UK Living Wage movement and its associated impacts upon the UK labour market. These have been discussed with reference to the research questions which frame and guide the focus of this project, and identified some core areas of discussion and ongoing debates among researchers and practitioners within the field. These will be returned to in chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8, to help provide a framework to the findings of this thesis that acknowledge the existing knowledge within the literature base of the UK Living Wage more widely.

This review has also identified a series of gaps within the current literature on the UK Living Wage, which this thesis makes a significant contribution to filling. These include a lack of focus on the impact of the Living Wage on workers themselves, as the ultimate recipients of these efforts to raise their wages; the need for more in-depth, case study-led examinations of the organisational decision-making and implementation processes of adoption of the Living Wage by individual employers, to better understand the wider impact of implementation on different-sized organisations, and across sectors; and the lack of any scholarly research on the specific work of the Living Wage Foundation, particularly during the body’s transition to a wider focus on decent work in recent years.

These are all gaps within the literature that this thesis places a key focus on filling, as well as making a significant contribution to the UK Living Wage literature base more widely.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1. Overview of research design

This chapter provides an overview of the project's research design, the methodological strategy employed, and the research methods utilised in conducting this study. In order to effectively approach and answer the stated research questions, a qualitative embedded case study approach was taken to gain an in-depth understanding of the complex nature of organisational decision-making and change. This chapter justifies how and why these methodological decisions were made, and how they were applied in practice.

This chapter also details the 'research journey' of this project, exploring its initial focus and the ways in which it has changed and evolved as a consequence of the fieldwork stage of the study. The fieldwork encompassed two distinct stages:

- An exploration of the ways in which employers arrive at the decision to become accredited Living Wage Employers, and the organisational consequences of this choice (including the impact on workers being paid the Living Wage);
- An examination of the role of the Living Wage Foundation as an actor within the employment relations field, focused on how it operates, interacts with potential and already-accredited Living Wage employers, and how it has evolved over time.

Extracts from fieldwork research diaries written throughout the fieldwork process are utilised to contextualise the ways in which the focus of interviews evolved as a greater level of understanding of the organisational impact of the Living Wage was arrived at, and as a more in-depth awareness of the campaign's wider role within British employment relations came to be understood.

The chapter acknowledges the complex nature of qualitative case study research in the field of employment relations, particularly when the case studies in question can be differentiated by size, sector, and a host of other features and characteristics. It provides a strong defence of case study research as a methodological approach, along with an explanation of the conceptual, theoretical, and ethical considerations underpinning the project. A description of the methodological approach taken in the use of semi-structured interviews for this project follows

on from this, along with a justification and explanation for the stakeholder theory perspective that underpins the theoretical framework of this study.

The findings discussed in this thesis are based on qualitative data collected from 85 in-depth, semi-structured qualitative interviews conducted over a fifteen-month period, from January 2018 to April 2019. Interviews were conducted in a wide variety of locations across the United Kingdom based on each participant's individual availability and preference of setting. The data encompasses five broad categories, specifically:

- Interviews conducted with strategic decision makers at three primary case study employers;
- Interviews with strategic decision makers within a number of other Living Wage Employers;
- Interviews with workers being paid at Living Wage rates within each of these organisations;
- Interviews with Living Wage Foundation and Citizens UK directors and staff members;
- Expert interviews with individual advocates who provide a particular perspective on the management, facilitation, and implementation of the UK Living Wage in Britain today.

The intention of these interviews was to form a multi-dimensional, data-driven picture that could help to bring together an understanding of the ways in which the UK Living Wage operates within the United Kingdom today, and to help explore and answer the following research questions:

1. Why do employers decide to adopt the Living Wage?
2. What are the organisational impacts of implementation of the Living Wage?
3. What impact does adoption of the Living Wage have on low-paid workers?
4. What is the role of the UK Living Wage campaign within a changing employment and industrial relations landscape?

The following sections detail the wider methodological development of this research.

4.2. Philosophical assumptions: epistemology and ontology

During the design stage of any research project, it is essential for the researcher to adopt what is known as a “theoretical perspective” to help frame the study, as well as to underpin its core ideas and arguments. Crotty (1998, p.3.) defines such a perspective as “the philosophical stance informing the methodology, and thus providing a context for the process and grounding its logic and criteria”. At its core such a perspective is concerned with ontology, of the nature of reality and of how we as humans individually and collectively construct what we believe to be “social reality” (Blaikie, 1993). Isaaksen (2015) argues that to engage with ontology “is to emphasise that reality and knowledge of reality are different things, that language and interpretation refer not only to other language and interpretations, but also to an existential reality”. In the context of this study, then, a focus on ontology can help us to understand how the nature of the social reality of the United Kingdom’s economic structure influences the economic compensation of workers for their labour.

The perspective adopted by this project frames its approach upon materialist assumptions concerning the ontological nature of social reality, acknowledging that meaning is a subjective process shaped by distinctive material contexts such as the employment of individuals in a wider institution, and the level of wages that these individuals receive (Crotty, 1998, Sayer, 1992). In the words of Eagleton (2016, p.1), researchers who adopt a materialist perspective hold that “material conditions set the pace in human affairs”, and that individuals are a “function of their surroundings” as much as being entities in and of themselves. Such a perspective is highly relevant for a project such as this, in which the questions being asked and the issues being explored with the participants of this study are focused upon the ways in which their respective roles within wider institutions have affected them, rather than a focus on themselves as individuals. Whether that be through receiving the UK Living Wage as a worker at an accredited organisation, or as a representative of a body such as the Living Wage Foundation looking to influence internal change within other employers, the prism that this project views and approaches its subjects through is one in which its primary concern is of how participants are affected by their material surroundings.

Indeed, it is impossible to undertake any exploration surrounding the impact of the wages that an individual receives without understanding the wider material conditions that such an

arrangement occurs within. Ha-Joon Chang (2011) makes this point compellingly, arguing that it is the “collective nature” of markets and institutions which affect the setting of wages as much as it is a sole worker’s worth and talent:

The widely-accepted assertion that, only if you let markets be will everyone be paid correctly and thus fairly, according to his worth, is a myth. Only when we part with this myth and grasp the political nature of the market and the collective nature of individual productivity will we be able to build a more just society in which historical legacies and collective actions, and not just individual talents and efforts, are properly taken into account in deciding how to reward people.

(2011, p. 56)

An acknowledgement and focus on these wider material conditions, then, is an essential foundation of any project grappling with how just or unjust a particular wage level is, and in analysing what can and cannot be determined to be a “living wage.”

Materialism has a well-established grounding in various movements of political radicalism such as the French Enlightenment, and while the term itself was constructed in the eighteenth century the doctrine itself has a much longer history, reaching back to 307 BC and the Greek philosopher Epicurus. Empiricist materialists such as the eighteenth- century English thinkers David Hartley and Joseph Priestley argue that the mind is made up of “sense- impressions,” which originated and naturally evolved from one’s surrounding environment: and that, if this environment could be so refashioned as to generate the ‘right’ kinds of sense data, human behaviour could be dramatically changed for the better. It is an optimistic school of thought which at its core has a hopeful outlook that the state of humankind can be improved through a reordering of the means in which we perceive both the world around us, and of knowledge itself.

A concept of equal importance to ontology in constructing a project’s theoretical perspective is that of epistemology, of what we count as knowledge and whether and how social phenomena can be both known and knowledge of them demonstrated (Mason, 2002). King and Horrocks (2010, p.8) contend that it is essential for any study to arrive at a consistency between epistemology and ontology, arguing that “without a perspective on the nature of social reality – how people might exist in the world – it would be impossible to consider what might count as

relevant knowledge in the research process.” This project accepts and acknowledges that a mind independent world exists, but that any significant meaning is only constructed within such a world when individuals engage with and interpret the material world. Such an approach contends that meaning is constructed through the act of engaging with the world, in particular through the means by which individuals exist within and interact with the material structures surrounding them, and of the ways in which they perceive this world and their role within it.

The above theoretical perspective informs the ways in which this exploration of the impact of the Living Wage in the UK is approached and conceptualised, and of the philosophical foundations of both the study’s research design and its core findings.

4.3. A wider lens: applying stakeholder theory as a theoretical framework

A key theme and argument of this thesis is that the UK Living Wage campaign cannot be understood only via an examination of the core campaign itself: instead, it must be viewed through the wider contextual “ecosystem” which it is a part of, and that in its entirety makes up the larger British employment and industrial relations landscape. This includes, but is not limited to:

- The individual employers which form the Living Wage Foundation’s accreditation network;
- The supply chain, procurement, and subcontracted employment networks of accredited Living Wage Employers;
- The individual workers affected by an organisation’s decision to pay the Living Wage;
- State actors at separate political and geographical levels, including local authorities, the Scottish Parliament, and Welsh Assembly;
- State actors and policymakers at a national level;
- Fellow industrial relations actors, including traditional trade unions, and the more recent emergence of increasingly influential civil society organisations such as Stonewall and the Fairtrade Foundation;

- Unaffiliated living wage movements based in specific regions and cities across the UK, including the Oxford and Brighton and Hove campaigns;
- Other voluntary accreditation schemes focused on the decent work agenda (including payment of the Living Wage) in operation within the UK, such as the Mayor of London's Good Work Standard, and the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter;
- Professional charities and associations with a focus on good work standards and corporate social responsibility, such as the BITC (Business in the Community) and the CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development);
- Value-drive consumers, and the role of ethical consumerism in spurring interest in the Living Wage.

Each of these separate groups, and the individuals that comprise them, have their own competing interests, strategic motivations, and separate standpoints on the role of the Living Wage movement in Britain today, and the wider raising of wages and promotion of decent work standards across the UK labour market. And whilst this project does not have the capacity to claim to have explored each and every one of these actors in an in-depth and comprehensive manner, the wide variety of employers, Citizens UK/Living Wage Foundation staff members, workers, Living Wage advocates, and state actors that interviews have been conducted with for this project, were all done so in acknowledgement of this wider ecosystem which the campaign operates within.

In line with this, stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984; Clarkson, 1995; Mullins, 2002) is utilised as a theoretical framework and lens throughout this thesis through which to explore and understand the UK Living Wage campaign, and the resultant consequences that the campaign has had on the employment and industrial relations landscape of Britain.

Stakeholder theory is a view of capitalism “that stresses the interconnected relationships between a business and its customers, suppliers, employees, investors, communities and others who have a stake in the organization” (Freeman, 1984). It is a perspective of both the labour market and the actions of individual employers which explicitly challenges the arguments of economists like Friedman, who contends that the only social responsibility organisations have is to maximise

profits for their shareholders, albeit whilst still operating within the law: in brief, that “the social responsibility of business is to increase its profits” (Friedman, 1970). It is also a rebuke to the theoretical perspective of corporate social responsibility offered by those such as Sternberg, who has argued that the purpose of business is to maximise long-term owner wealth beyond the interests of either consumers or workers, or any other associated actors (1994). And while Sternberg does acknowledge that the interests of other actors are an important consideration to be aware of (in ultimate service of increasing the wealth of owners), and that distributive justice is an important element of a business operating within the rules, “‘taking account’ of something is entirely different from ‘being accountable’ to it” (1994, p. 122): for example, by voluntarily becoming part of an accreditation network designed to oversee the facilitation of higher wages for workers.

In contrast to this, stakeholder theory asserts that businesses have an obligation to the wider socioeconomic environment around them, and within which they operate. Cannon (1994) defines this stance as follows:

There exists an implicit or explicit contract between business and the community in which it operates. Business is expected to create wealth; supply markets; generate employment; innovate and produce a sufficient surplus to sustain its activities and improve its competitiveness while contributing to the maintenance of the community in which it operates. Society is expected to provide an environment in which business can develop and prosper, allowing investors to earn returns while ensuring that the stakeholders and their dependents can enjoy the benefits of their involvement without fear or arbitrary or unjust action. The interdependence between society and business cannot be overstated.

(Cannon, 1994, p.32)

This concept, of the interdependence of organisations and the wider system within which they operate, lies at the heart of this study, particularly in its analysis of the impact on both employers and workers of the implementation of a Living Wage. It can also be found within the claims by the Living Wage campaign themselves: that employers voluntarily raising wages is “good for business, and good for society” (Living Wage Foundation, 2020).

Mullins (2002) argues that at their most fundamental point, the differing perspectives discussed above “provide very different views of how a business should act, because of their differing assumptions concerning what a business is *for*” (p. 519). From the perspective of stakeholder theory, the voluntary adoption of a non-mandated higher wage rate for low-paid workers would be helping to fulfil the wider social obligations an employer has towards wider society; from a shareholder and/or owner-driven perspective, however, such a decision would be considered unethical and counterproductive, in that it would be directly removing profit from owners and shareholders and redistributing it to workers. Mullins does, however, point out instances where such a decision could be justified under the concept of a firm operating out of “intelligent self-interest”, in which it embarks on certain courses of action “not necessarily through any direct intent but in pursuit of its main duty” (ibid):

Intelligent self-interest may also – for example – drive a firm to build strong, trusting relationships with its suppliers and competitors (because it will be better off as result), or an attractive working environment for employees (because it wishes to recruit and keep the best, in order to be able to compete more effectively.

(ibid, p. 520)

The latter example brings to mind the arguments put forward for the “business case” for the Living Wage, discussed more extensively in chapter 5. Nevertheless, the gulf in the acceptance of a wider social conscience for employers that is central to stakeholder theory, and the dismissal of such obligations under the shareholder and owner-driven motivations of thinkers like Friedman and Sternberg, demonstrate the differences in these theoretical perspectives on the role of businesses in society.

It is because of this contention at the heart of stakeholder theory, that employers should seek to deliver social value for the wider environment around them beyond the interests of their own owners and shareholders, that makes this perspective an appropriate lens through which to better understand the role and impact of the UK Living Wage campaign. The underpinnings of the theory are in line with the campaign’s own narratives on why employers should voluntarily adopt higher rates of pay for their workers, in particular the contrast between legally mandated minimum rates of pay within Britain, and a higher voluntary Living Wage which better reflects the cost of living. Following the tenets of stakeholder theory from these particular circumstances,

businesses have an even stronger socioeconomic obligation to pay higher wages, taking on a higher level of responsibility for preventing its employees from suffering the effects of in-work poverty, in the absence of sufficient regulatory protection from the state for maintaining wage rates at a level that enables workers to afford a decent standard of living. Given this fit, then, it is appropriate that this perspective of employer behaviour and the interconnected nature of different stakeholders across the employment and industrial relations landscape be utilised as a theoretical framework for this study.

4.4. Choice of qualitative methodology

As discussed more extensively in the literature review of this thesis, there remains a distinct research gap in the utilisation of qualitative research to examine and explore the impact of the Living Wage in the UK. The most extensive study to date takes a mixed methods approach (Heery, Nash and Hann, 2017), while existing qualitative literature in this field is less focused on the impact of the measure itself than it is on the intricacies of the successful campaigns that brought it into being (Prowse, 2017; Wills, 2002), although there are exceptions to this (Wills, 2009; Werner and Lim, 2016). Given the lack of attention on the perspectives and experiences of employers in their interactions with the Living Wage in the field thus far, there remains cause for an extensive exploration of such issues through the in-depth, person-centred manner which only a qualitative methodological approach can provide.

Roshan and Deeptee (2009) provide a strong case for the use of qualitative research in the study of organisations, arguing that qualitative research methods “can be used to explore several areas such as human behaviour which cannot be quantified but are yet important to an organisation.” Perhaps the most central of these in the formulation of this project was the desire, articulated through this study’s research questions, to arrive at an understanding of the complex interplay of various actors and personalities involved when an employer makes the decision to become an accredited Living Wage Employer, and of the personal and individual reactions to such a change for those workers affected. For such a focus, a qualitative approach made logical sense, with its strengths in exploring and understanding “the story behind the numbers” (Latimer, Ginis and Perrier, 2011) rather than the numbers themselves.

Hammarberg, Kirkman, and de Lacey (2016, p.11) argue that while quantitative research is most useful “when general or probability information is sought on opinions, attitudes, views, beliefs or

preferences; when variables can be isolated and defined. . . and when the question or problem is known, clear and unambiguous,” a qualitative approach and methods are more useful to utilise when the research questions in place are “about experience, meaning and perspective, most often from the standpoint of the participant. . . these data are usually not amenable to counting or measuring.” This project follows this line of thinking, with a clear focus on the individuals behind the decisions rather than a more quantitative, numerical-based approach concerned with the specific number of employers who chose to become accredited with the Living Wage Foundation, for a variety of pre-hypothesised reasons.

It is for its advantages in the rich detail of individual experiences and processes, then, that makes a qualitative case study perspective appropriate for this study, and which is where this project places its own focus as a means of understanding the complex factors that help inform the UK Living Wage, and how it works in practice.

4.5. The nature and use of case study research

Case study research is the exploration, investigation, and analysis of a singular case, dedicated to capturing the complex nature of the object of study (Stake, 1995). A case study approach is an effective strategy in allowing researchers to explore individuals and organisations, simple through complex interventions, relationships, and communities (Yin, 2003), and for a project of this nature provides a means of exploring the complex myriad of processes and relationships involved in the decision of an organisation to become an accredited Living Wage Employer. Their flexible nature allows researchers the freedom and flexibility to collect data in the specific ways that are open to them, depending on their level of access and the nature of the case study in question (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011), something Stake (1995, pp. xi – xii) refers to as a “palette of methods.”

Schramm (1971, p. 22-23) provides a pertinent definition of case study research that applies particularly well to this project, arguing that “the essence of a case study, the central tendency among all types of case study, is that it tries to illuminate a decision or set of decisions: why were they taken, how were they implemented, and with what result?” Given this study’s focus on the internal decision-making processes and procedures of accredited Living Wage Employers, such an approach is highly appropriate as a means to underpin and frame this research.

There is a well-established debate in the methodological literature about whether case study research should be considered a methodology in its own right, or whether it should be defined as merely the choices made within the parameters of a project (Stake, 2005; Creswell, 2007; Tight, 2010). This thesis, however, adopts Berg's acknowledgement of case study research as a methodology in its own right, and his succinct summary of what such an approach entails:

Case study is an approach capable of examining simple or complex phenomenon, with units of analysis varying from single individuals to large corporations and businesses; it entails using a variety of lines of action in its data-gathering segments, and can meaningfully make use of and contribute to the application of theory.

(Berg, 2009, p. 317–318)

The strengths of case study research lay in its ability to generate “extremely rich, detailed, and in-depth information” on its chosen cases, what Geertz (1973) refers to as “thick description.” And, most pertinently for this subject, the uncovering of “the manifest interactions of significant factors characteristic of this phenomenon, individual, community, or institution.” Through the in-depth nature of case studies, researchers are “able to capture various nuances, patterns, and more latent elements that other research approaches might overlook” (ibid). Given the focus in this project of understanding the intricate ways individual organisations operate, and of the interplay between employers and an accreditation body such as the Living Wage Foundation, a research approach that can uncover the complexities of these areas of inquiry in an in-depth manner is essential.

The application of case study research designs also provides particular strengths to a research field such as industrial relations, which has changed extensively since its traditional focus on union-management relations. Whitfield and Strauss (1998, p.5) note that the scope of industrial relations as a discipline has now “broadened to include the entire world of world of work – issues such as “high-performance” work practices, occupational health and safety, employment discrimination, employee satisfaction, job security, and comparative international industrial relations.” In such an environment, and in the intersections between economics, sociology, organisational behaviour, and political science that now help to comprise and form the contemporary industrial relations landscape, the in-depth complexity that case study research can provide in understanding a phenomenon from a number of different perspectives is essential.

Yin argues convincingly that a case study approach is most effective when the project in question is attempting to answer “how?” and “why?” questions (1994, p.6), in addition to practical considerations such as time and access. Kitay and Callus also suggest that “the case study is particularly well suited to researching motives, power relations, or processes that involve understanding complex social interactions” (1998, p.104), all of which are factors present and central to the focus of this project in its exploration of employers’ motivations for becoming Living Wage Employers, along with the relationship and interactions between accredited employers and the Living Wage Foundation itself.

Berg makes a particularly persuasive case for the use of case study research approaches when undertaking research concerning organisations. Defining such research as “the systematic gathering of enough information about a particular organization to allow the investigator insight into the life of that organization” (2009, p.330), he argues that “the case method is an extremely useful technique for researching relationships, behaviours, attitudes, motivations, and stressors in organizational settings” (ibid, p.331). There is precedence of the effectiveness of a case study methodology in existing Living Wage literature, too, as discussed in more detail elsewhere in this thesis (Coulson and Bonner, 2015; Werner and Lim, 2016; Zeng and Honig, 2016).

The utilisation of case study research in the industrial relations field is a long and varied one, going back at least to 1894 and the Webbs’ seminal case study research into the trade union movement of the day. Kaufman (1993) also reminds us that case studies were utilised strongly by the early institutionalists of North America, while the contemporary industrial relations research landscape is filled with prominent examples of case study research (Gouldman, 1954; Lipset, Trow and Coleman, 1956; Goldthorpe et al, 1968; Nichols and Beynon, 1977; Batsone, Boraston, and Frenkel (1978); Kochan, Katz, and McKersie (1994)). Kitay and Callus have argued strongly that the continued popularity of case study research not only reflects the increasingly multidisciplinary nature of industrial relations research, but also the desire of IR researchers “to provide explanations and an understanding of complex social phenomena, for which case studies are particularly well suited” (1998, p.101).

One particular strength of a case study approach that justifies its application in this project is that it allows a particular area of inquiry to be explored not through one lens, “but rather a variety of lenses which allows for multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood”

(Baxter and Jack, 2008, p.544). Stake (1995, p. xii) argues that case study research also allows a researcher “to catch the complexity of a single case . . . case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances”. Given this project’s focus on exploring the impact of Living Wage accreditation and implementation on a number of specific organisations that adopt this pay policy, as well as on the multiplicity of views on the Living Wage explored throughout interviews for this thesis, these strengths of a case study research strategy make it a natural fit for this project.

The sheer variety of the markets and sectors that different accredited Living Wage employers operate in also favours a case study approach to research in this field, a position taken by a number of investigations into the Living Wage by Wills (2002, 2008, 2009, 2013), as well as by Coulson and Bonner in their 2015 exploration of the business case for the Living Wage for UK employers. They argue that a need to “recognise the business case in context . . . helps to justify the case study approach taken when gathering evidence from Living Wage employers in the UK,” and reiterate that, in the same vein as this project, “each case is individual, and while comparison and contrast may be drawn between some cases, the project is not intended to provide a general position of Living Wage employers, but emphasise individual “stories” (Coulson and Bonner, 2015, p.10). This is the same approach taken by this study.

Prowse and Fells (2016, p.151) also advocate the use of case study research in the particular context of exploring the impact of the Living Wage, arguing that “case study analysis is useful in understanding the dynamics of a situation and how it might evolve which, given the evolution of events in this case, is an important consideration.”

4.6. An embedded case study approach

This thesis methodologically frames the Living Wage as a case study in encouraging higher voluntary employment standards among British organisations, specifically concerning the raising of wages for those workers at the lower end of the income scale, and as such adopts an embedded case study framework (Yin, 1994; Scholz and Tietje, 2002; Hancock and Algozzine, 2006). Embedded case studies traditionally involve more than one unit or object of analysis, with numerous forms of data gathered and utilised (Scholz and Tietje, p. 10, 2002). The multiplicity of evidence gathered and explored in this project, in line with Yin’s operational explanations for an embedded case study approach, are broken down and investigated in distinctive subunits, with

each providing a separately salient piece of the case as a whole (ibid). In the case of this project, the subunits of research are separated into the following categories:

1. Three primary case study employers (or “sub unit employers”);
2. The Living Wage Foundation, in its role as an independent civil regulatory actor in the employment relations field;
3. Workers receiving Living Wage rates of pay, who are best placed to identify the socioeconomic impacts of an employer becoming accredited;
4. Living Wage advocates, comprising individuals with particular expertise and understanding of how the Living Wage operates in Britain.

Kitay and Callus argue that the very nature of case studies “deal with the complex relations within a unit as well as the interaction between the unit and its wider environment” (1998, p.104), making such an approach appropriate for this project given its rather expansive focus. The differing perspectives gathered within these subunits, assembled not only through the use of qualitative interviews but also through content analysis of organisations’ websites, publicly available statistics, and other means of collecting relevant data and evidence, will be discussed both separately and in tandem with each other in the findings section of this thesis.

In order to provide a means of understanding each organisation on an individual basis, and while still being classified as subunits of a case study on the Living Wage in the UK on a project-wide level in their own right (Stake, 1994), the three primary Living Wage employers focused upon in this thesis also adopt the methodological foundations of what Stake calls “instrumental case studies”. Berg (2009) contends that instrumental case studies are selected and defined by not just the relevance and particular circumstances of the individual case in question, but to “help the researcher better understand some external theoretical question, issue, or problem”, providing larger insights into a research issue which help to make it more generalisable (Creswell, 2002). In adopting the conventions of instrumental case studies, the intention is to ensure that their findings can be explained on an individual level as well as on a collective one.

In contrast, data collection concerning the Living Wage Foundation was approached as an intrinsic case study, defined as when the particular case itself is of central interest rather than

selected from part of a wider collective (Creswell, 1998; Stake, 1994). This is appropriate given both the centrality and the uniqueness of the Foundation's existence and its operations, and the essential nature of understanding how the body works in practice in conducting any project concerned with understanding the UK Living Wage on a comprehensive level. It is important to note here Stake's argument that it is hard to draw distinct lines between a researcher's interest in and exploration of an intrinsic case study as opposed to an instrumental one, and that given a study's multiple areas of interest, "a zone of combined purpose separates them" (Stake, 1994, p.237; Berg, 2009). This is of particular relevance to a project such as this, where intrinsic and instrumental case studies sit alongside each other in mutual support to assist in providing a wider understanding of the way that the Living Wage in the UK operates.

The unexpected departure of a case study employer from this study posed a number of complications, in both practical terms as well as research design considerations, but also yielded some positive results for the project as a whole by retroactively turning the case in question into a de facto exploratory case study (Sholz and Tietje, 2002, Yin 2003). This enabled future data collection endeavours with other case study employers to be informed by the lessons learned from previous interviews, both in asking more pertinent questions through a greater understanding of employer and worker experiences, and in knowing when to pursue a certain line of discussion or thinking to gain a greater level of insight into a specific area. This was of particular importance in arriving at an awareness of the centrality of subcontracted employment policies and supply chain networks to any comprehensive understanding of how the Living Wage operates within the UK, and in what questions to ask concerning these areas as well as who to talk to within each organisation to explore these areas of inquiry further.

4.7, Research methods

Kitay and Callus (1998, p.103) argue that "there is no "best" method in research: rather, there are simply techniques that are better suited to generating some types of data to others." One of the primary strengths of qualitative research methods are their ability to allow participants to describe their insights and experiences in their own words and in ways that they feel comfortable with, with the intention being that what they share with researchers is translated to outputs in a way which retains their own individual voice as much as possible (Blaikie, 2000). Given this project's focus on the personal insights of relevant individuals' interactions with the Living

Wage and the Living Wage Foundation, a qualitative research methods-led approach is the most appropriate in order to answer this study's research questions in the most in-depth and accurate manner.

When designing any guidelines and procedures for the employment of interviews in service of qualitative research, it is important to remember that the interviewer is an active participant in the process of knowledge production that interviews create, rather than an uninterested bystander (Tarrant, 2015). As researchers our subjectivity is "a garment that cannot be removed" (Peshkin, 1982), and this will inevitably have an influence on both the interview itself and the findings, when the discussion of the interview in question is being analysed and insights derived from it (Boyce and Neal, 2006).

Therefore, researchers must ensure that they are both aware of these issues, and practice a keen sense of active reflexivity (Mason, 2001) throughout the process of such fieldwork. Gubrium and Holstein (2001, p.11) argue that rather than viewing the conducting of interviews primarily as a research technique, "we would do well also to consider its broader social, institutional, and representational contours", and this project subscribes to this approach. It also concurs with the authors framing of the interview process "as an occasion for purposefully animated participants to *construct* versions of reality interactionally rather than merely purvey data" (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995, p.14), and of interviews "involving the construction of knowledge more than the excavation of it" (Mason, 2002).

This conception of the interview process sees research participants as active practitioners themselves in the research being undertaken, what Mason (2001, p.63) terms as "meanings and understandings. . .created in an interaction which is effectively a co-production involving researcher and interviewee." Given this study's focus on understanding the development of the Living Wage in Britain through the experiences of the individuals involved in taking, implementing, and experiencing the effects of these decisions, understanding the individuals themselves and their lived experiences is of paramount importance.

Given this approach to the interview process, and the co-production of knowledge involved in these interactions, the utilisation of in-depth, semi-structured interviews have been utilised for the fieldwork component this study. The open-ended nature of this approach, and the broad questions and freedom to prompt and elaborate on certain areas afforded to both the researcher

and the participant that are part of the accepted structure of the model (Gubrium and Holstein, 2001, p.590), have been an effective research method in exploring the questions posed by this project. A semi-structured model of interviewing is considered to be more effective when the researcher has some existing consideration of topics and issues that they wish to explore with participants (Edwards and Holland, 2013), while also allowing freedom to explore unanticipated areas of inquiry that may emerge during the interview itself.

Before the decision to utilise in-depth interviews was decided upon, consideration was given to the application of another set of research methods. Media content analysis (Neuendorf, 2002) was considered as a means of understanding the Living Wage Foundation and its evolution through the prism of the growing impact of the Citizens UK Living Wage campaign on the national political landscape since its establishment in 2001, seen through the exceptionally rapid rise of the Living Wage as a discussion point in the national media in the past two decades. This was ultimately disregarded as a methodological approach, as its focus on a particular aspect of the campaign's development (it's public and political impact) would fail to explore the entirety of its subsequent progression, along with the accepted premise that in order to be exploited to its fullest potential, media content analysis requires a larger-scale level of resources and a more forensic methodological focus than this doctoral project could ultimately provide (Hansen et al, 1998; Macnamara, 2003), especially given its secondary focus on examining the impact of the Living Wage on employers and workers themselves.

Utilising semi-structured interviews as a research method for this project has enabled this study to accumulate an in-depth look at the impact of the UK Living Wage on both employers and employees as well as exploring the movement itself, utilising the strengths of qualitative research in observations "that capture direct quotations about people's personal perspectives and experiences" (Patton, 2002, p.40) to generate a richer and more insightful quality of data than would be available purely through a quantitative approach. The findings of this thesis will also enable new ideas and approaches in this area of research to be considered, which will lead to further areas of inquiry to be followed up in future research outputs and agendas (Travers, 2001). No research method, be it qualitative or quantitative, is perfect; what is crucial, however, is ensuring that the advantages and disadvantages of the particular methods being utilised by a

researcher are acknowledged and anticipated as much as possible when both designing and conducting a research project.

4.8. Selection of cases

Blake (1995, p.3) contends with regards to selecting case studies for a project that in certain situations, “we will have a research question, a puzzlement, a need for general understanding, and feel that we may get insight into the question by studying a particular case,” and it is this approach that provides the foundations of this project. The cases focused upon have been selected to make a considerable contribution to current knowledge and the existing evidence base of the impact of the Living Wage in Britain, and present particularly interesting cases owing to their own specific circumstances among the over 7,000 organisations currently accredited with the Living Wage Foundation. They are also focused in sectors that present their own unique challenges in paying the Living Wage, that can help provide some insights into the challenges of adopting the measure for particular organisations.

Kitay and Callus remind us that while in most instances selected case studies will represent a particular aspect or feature of its given population, “this does not mean that the case study is representative of the population” (1998, p. 106), and that for a researcher to be aware of the extent to which a case is atypical (or indeed to determine which are most interesting to examine), it is important to have a sound understanding of the separate cases that can be potentially selected for scrutiny.

At the time of planning the empirical research strategy for this project, the total number of accredited Living Wage Employers to select cases from totalled 2,100, with a heavy concentration of organisations in particular in the legal, technology, accountancy, and financial professions (Living Wage Foundation, 2016). As is discussed elsewhere in this thesis in more extensive detail, there is a consistent line of argument from employers in many of these sectors for their reasoning for beginning to pay the Living Wage, with many such commitments being taken either as the result of targeted campaigning from Citizens UK to pressure them into doing so, or on an entirely voluntary basis on the basis of the moral and business case arguments for doing so (Coulson and Bonner, 2015). Nevertheless, there also existed a considerable variety of organisations within this number that had both not experienced any pressure from protests to become accredited, and were situated within industries with very few Living Wage Employers

already accredited, and yet had done so regardless. These circumstances provided any academic researcher conducting empirical research within this field in 2016 with a wealth of choices in which cases to select, and examine in greater detail.

4.9. Selection criteria

In order to make an informed decision about where to focus empirical research fieldwork efforts, a list of criteria was established to help guide the selection of cases. These were as follows:

1. Organisations that had become Living Wage Employers from 2012 to 2015;
2. Organisations operating within sectors where paying above legal minimum wage requirements for certain roles was not the norm;
3. Organisations operating within sectors that still had a low density of accredited Living Wage Employers as a whole;

The rationale for these criteria were as follows:

1. So that those involved in the decision to accredit were still accessible to be interviewed, and the measure had been fully embedded within the firm for long enough that longer-term ramifications could be seen;
2. To ascertain why such organisations had taken a decision which was against established conventional wisdom in the sector that they operate within;
3. To understand more fully the consequences and reaction to their choice to accredit amongst their competitors, and whether or not their example led to other employers in that sector following their example.

The decision was also made to explore the experiences of both employers who had been the focus of specific Citizens UK/Living Wage Foundation pressure to accredit, and those who chose to do so without any form of external public pressure. The variety of these experiences were ascertained not only through the primary case study employers selected, but also through insights derived through the wider expert interviews conducted for this project.

The decision was made early on in the research design process not to select cases on the basis that they were of similar size, sector, geographical location, and/or were alike in any other ways

to each other. Given the sheer breath of variety within the employers officially accredited in 2016, from independent breweries with less than five staff members to multi-site enterprises with a workforce of thousands, it was (and still is) not possible to determine what a representative or “ideal” UK Living Wage Employer looks like: therefore, it was deemed of more importance to focus on their common experiences and interaction with the Living Wage and the Foundation itself, more than any other common characteristics between them.

Nevertheless, and as can be seen in the recurring themes of unexpected work-related outcomes reported by a wide variety of Living Wage Employers in the findings chapters of this thesis, extensive comparisons and contrasts can be made between organisations of vastly different size, scope and sector upon their adoption of the Living Wage without their extensive differences rendering such judgements unfeasible. Equally, the established literature on the cross-sectoral impact of the Living Wage, particularly that conducted by Heery, Nash and Hann (2017), was instrumental in deciding to select cases for this project based on criteria separate to their defining characteristics of size/sector/operations.

Following in this tradition, the findings of this thesis will in a similar way be transferable to other employers considering adopting the measure regardless of size or sector, as other Living Wage impact case studies have been to date. This is what Stake (1978, p.7) refers to as “case-to-case transfer”, and what Firestone describes succinctly as “whenever a person in one setting considers adopting a program or idea from another” (1993, p.17).

4.10. Case study employers

The three case study employers that this thesis is primarily concerned with are a university, a holiday park, and a construction firm, based in the West of the UK, and the North East and South East of England respectively. The study also details insights gathered from a host of other accredited Living Wage employers, including a multi-site national clothing retailer; a Central London cleaning company; and an app-based platform provider, among a series of others. The intention in speaking to a wide variety of accredited organisations in tandem with the primary case study employers was twofold:

1. To explore the internal decision-making procedures and ramifications of accreditation with a wide variety of employers across the Living Wage network, to ascertain common and divergent experiences in both process and outcome;
2. To understand the relationship that separate organisations have with the Living Wage Foundation itself, and their own thoughts on how the Living Wage campaign and accreditation network is administered across the UK at present.

Specific organisations and individuals were approached for interview based on their suitability in providing insights into one or both of the above criteria, with the intention being that these insights (when paired with the findings from the project's three main case study employers) can help to provide a comprehensive and multi-actor-informed understanding of how the Living Wage operates across Britain today.

Case study employer one

Case study employer one (or CSE1) is a university based in the West of the UK, and with a workforce of over 6,600 is the largest of the organisations focused upon in-depth within this project. The university became accredited with the Living Wage Foundation in November 2014, following a concerted joint effort by a local Citizens UK chapter and the university's own cleaners in publicly pressuring them to do so. A two-pronged campaign to persuade its student union (categorised as an employer in its own right) to also become accredited continues to be fought at the time of writing, with both internal and external pressure being applied in different forms (discussed more in chapter 5 of this thesis).

To date, the UK higher education sector has a remarkably low number of Living Wage-employers as a whole, with fewer than ten in operation across the UK at the time of this case study's own accreditation, and only thirty-five universities accredited at the present time of writing (Living Wage Foundation, 2020). Numerous campaigns for individual universities to accredit, conducted by a mixture of traditional trade unions, social movements led by Citizens UK chapters, and the internal mobilisation of workers themselves, are currently in existence across a number of British universities. The diversity of these campaigns demonstrate the wide variety of actors involved in the wider Living Wage landscape beyond Citizens UK and the

Living Wage Foundation themselves, reflected in the stakeholder theory perspective utilised as a theoretical framework for this thesis.

For example, at the University of Birmingham there has been a concerted collective effort by the trade union Unison, the Citizens UK chapter Birmingham Citizens, and other civic leaders to persuade the organisation to become an accredited Living Wage Employer. In 2019 this campaign organised successive rounds of industrial action to publicly pressure the university to do so (Unison, 2019), with seven of the nine of the city's MPs calling on the university to accredit as a "moral imperative" (Dromey et al, 2019). CSE1 saw a similar multi-faceted campaigning approach to persuade it to become accredited, discussed in more detail in chapter 5 of this thesis.

With an institution this large under scrutiny through this project, it was important to identify as early as possible the most pertinent individuals to conduct interviews with. The criteria that informed who would be approached were as follows:

1. Individuals involved in the university's decision to become an accredited Living Wage Employer;
2. Individuals involved in the implementation of the Living Wage;
3. Individuals in a position to experience and/or understand the impact of accreditation within the organisation;
4. University/subcontracted workers paid at Living Wage rates of pay;
5. Individuals involved in the campaign for the university to begin paying the Living Wage.

Following these criteria, a wide array of individuals were approached and interviewed, including the Chief Operating Officer whose support led to the campaign being taken seriously; the HR director who put forward the initial proposal for the Living Wage to the University Executive Board; the Vice Chancellor who ultimately approved the decision to become accredited; the Director of the Procurement department, whose job it was to tackle the logistical complexity of implementing the measure; and university workers themselves, some of whom could contrast their pre-accreditation salaries with the new Living Wage rates that they were now paid. All interviews were conducted over a fifteen-month period, from January 2018 to April 2019.

In some instances, and as is discussed elsewhere in this chapter, unexpected insights derived from early interviews within the organisation helped to inform whom to speak to next. For example, comments from the Chief Operating Officer of the logistical difficulties of embedding a Living Wage across and down an employer's supply chains led to a greater focus on procurement and subcontracted employment relationships, not just in terms of this particular case study but in other fieldwork interviews (and consequentially the final thesis itself).

CSE1 provides a number of important insights into the complexity for large organisations of adopting a publicly accountable, voluntary income standard for its workforce. The internal operational implications of implementing the Living Wage on job design, wage differentials, and subcontracted workers are of particular note, and have lessons for other employers when considering adopting the measure in future.

Case study employer two

Case study employer two (or CSE2) is a holiday park in the South East of England, providing seasonal caravan stays and year-round camping grounds. The park became an officially accredited Living Wage Employer in November 2014, and has since taken on a leading role within the LWE network in extolling the moral and business benefits of adopting the measure. In contrast to CSE1, there was no public campaign encouraging the organisation to begin paying the Living Wage, and the firm have a long-established and extensive record of corporate social responsibility initiatives in other areas, including sustainability and ethical tourism.

The organisation remains one of only six holiday parks accredited as a Living Wage Employer in the UK at present (Living Wage Foundation, 2020), with the hospitality sector as a whole possessing very few LWEs in contrast to other sectors (an issue discussed in more detail in chapter 8 of this thesis). With a workforce of under one hundred it is of a vastly different size to CSE1, presenting a clear contrast and the opportunity to ascertain the similarities and differences in decision making processes and post-accreditation outcomes when the Living Wage is adopted by organisations of different proportions.

Given the differences in size of relevant personnel to speak to in contrast to CSE1, considering the relative size of each organisation, decisions on who to interview presented fewer difficulties. Nevertheless, the same criteria were followed for selection:

1. Individuals involved in the park's decision to become an accredited Living Wage Employer;
2. Individuals involved in the implementation of the Living Wage;
3. Individuals in a position to experience and/or understand the impact of accreditation within the organisation;
4. Workers paid at Living Wage rates of pay.

This list included the Director and owner of the holiday park, who took the decision to begin paying the Living Wage; the HR Officer who was tasked with implementing its adoption, and monitoring the short and longer-term consequences; the Financial Officer responsible for identifying and understanding the financial implications on the organisation; the PR Manager accountable for publicly celebrating their decision to accredit, and encouraging other holiday parks to do so; and the park workers whose own salaries were affected by the move. All interviews were conducted from March to April 2019.

CSE2 provides an example of how the Living Wage comes to be adopted within smaller organisations with less diffuse decision-making processes, and of the internal and external consequences of becoming an accredited LWE within a sector that has not yet embraced it in large numbers. Taken in conjunction with insights derived from this project's other primary case study employers and other Living Wage advocates that interviews have been conducted with, these empirical findings present an important insight into how and why the Living Wage is adopted by firms of different shapes and sizes in Britain today.

Case study employer three

Case study employer three (or CSE3) is a multi-purpose construction firm, based in the North East of England. The organisation was the first in both its sector and its region to become an officially accredited Living Wage Employer, and has taken a firm lead across the North East in extolling the benefits of Living Wage accreditation to other potentially interested employers.

In a similar fashion to CSE2, CSE3 was not the recipient of any targeted industrial relations action or civil society Living Wage campaign extolling it to become accredited, but did so through their own voluntary initiative.

CSE3, with a workforce of 500, presented a series of practical considerations in which individuals it would be both possible to speak to, as well as who would be the most relevant. Regardless, the same criteria were followed for selection as for the other two primary case studies:

1. Individuals involved in the firm's decision to become an accredited Living Wage Employer;
2. Individuals involved in the implementation of the Living Wage;
3. Individuals in a position to experience and/or understand the impact of accreditation within the organisation;
4. Workers paid at Living Wage rates of pay.

This list included the Finance Manager, who first brought the Living Wage to the rest of the board as a potential direction in which to take the firm; the Managing Director, who made the ultimate decision to sign off on the idea; a number of members of the finance, HR, and facilities teams; along with individual construction workers and apprentices, who were also paid the Living Wage. All interviews were conducted from October to December 2018.

CSE3 presents an example of how Living Wage accreditation can be first introduced to a region through the independent, voluntary initiative of ethically-minded individuals in positions of influence within the firms that they work for. The insights and findings derived from the empirical fieldwork efforts of this project within the organisation also demonstrate the wider impact that the Living Wage can have on the actions of individual workers and employment agencies within a local labour market, findings discussed in more detail in chapter 6 of this thesis.

4.11. The Living Wage Foundation as an institutional actor

As an acknowledgement of the emerging context of this area of inquiry, this project places the Living Wage Foundation as an institutional actor in its own right, working not just as an overseer of individual employers, but also alongside them in influencing their choices and holding them to account for their pledges. Given the role of the Living Wage Foundation as an actor that has created and continues to manage the accreditation process for employers that have voluntarily

decided to begin paying Living Wage rates, it is not possible to understand the motivations and ultimate decisions of individual employers to become part of this network without also understanding the role (and internal workings) of the Foundation itself in facilitating these choices. This intimate relationship between employers and the Foundation is a central part of this project's focus, with the body as important an actor within the research as the case study organisations themselves. The intricacies of the case study firms' own individual relationships with the Foundation will be explored and discussed as a means of better understanding both the case study organisations and the LWF itself, through varying insights of the issues and dynamics at play in this area of UK employment relations.

Through interviews with the majority of the Foundation's operational team, the evolution of the body since its establishment in 2012 will also be charted through this project. This will include the establishment and upkeep of the Living Wage Employer accreditation process and network; its "carrot and stick" approach with Citizens UK in campaigning and encouraging employers to become accredited through a dual methodology of public campaigning and private encouragement; and its more recent moves into a larger focus on what entails "decent work" other than hourly rates of pay.

To help contextualise this focus on the development and role of the Foundation as an institutional actor in the employment relations field, a number of in-depth interviews have also been conducted with a host of other employers and individuals with a particular expertise in this area. These include discussions with Citizens UK staff members, other Living Wage employers who are involved with the Foundation in their own right, as well as organisations who are still only considering whether to become accredited. These various avenues of data will be grouped together and discussed within the project's overarching framework as "Living Wage Advocates", to be discussed alongside the case study organisations and Living Wage Foundation as actors in their own right.

4.12. Data collection

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the findings discussed in this project are derived from an extensive data collection stage in which 85 in-depth, semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted, over a fifteen-month period from January 2018 to April 2019. The overall schedule of the interviews was dictated by the availability and willingness of participants

themselves, rather than following any firm timetable established by the project's research design itself, and was modified several times as initial plans put in place became disrupted by various external circumstances. The most severe of these was the loss of two of the project's initially planned case study employers after already embarking on data collection with both workers and management staff, a situation discussed in more detail further on in this chapter utilising fieldwork research diary entries written at the time.

Interviews were conducted face to face where possible, and via video (Skype) or audio phone call for the six scenarios in which meeting in person was not an option. Almost all were located in workplace environments or on-site cafés/restaurants, and covered a wide cross-section of the United Kingdom. From both a personal and a researcher perspective there was a clear impetus when conducting data collection to ensure that the findings represented more than just a London-centric view of the role of the Living Wage in Britain today, as well as to ensure that a wide array of experiences from employers in different fields and in various regions of the country were well represented in the project's final outputs.

4.13. Access

Access to the participants that encompassed the numerous subunits of analysis that this project is concerned with were achieved in a number of different ways:

1. Direct requests via email or telephone from researcher to participants;
2. Introduced and recommended as an independent researcher to Living Wage Employers through contacts at the Living Wage Foundation itself, utilising their own networks on behalf of this project as a gatekeeper;
3. Introduced and recommended as somebody to speak to from Living Wage Employers to other Living Wage Employers that they were aware of and in contact with personally;
4. The arrangement of specific interviews with organisation's staff through their own internal communications.

Of the primary employers themselves, case studies one and three were set up and arranged through a recommendation from the Living Wage Foundation to allow access for this project, while case study two was arranged through a direct email request from researcher to employer.

When conducting interviews with workers within these case study organisations, it was made clear to both management staff and workers themselves that interviews could not be conducted with anyone being involuntarily compelled to be part of the project, and that any comments made that could jeopardise their own positions in any way would be anonymised in all instances, and not utilised if necessary. The templates for email requests for participation in the project, and information sheets provided to all participants before the interview stage, can be found in the appendices of this thesis.

4.14. Access and the insider-outsider dilemma

The varying degrees of access strategies during the data collection stage of this project posed interesting methodological questions on what Dwyer and Buckle (2009, p.55) define as the eternal dilemma of being an “insider-outsider” when conducting qualitative research. Insider research refers to research being conducted by individuals who can consider themselves fellow members of the same populations that they are investigating (Kanuha, 2000), while outsider research is defined most simply as “studying a group to which they are not a member” (Dwyer and Buckle (2009, p.55).

Such labels cannot always adequately describe the complexities of qualitative data collection, however. Indeed, Maykut & Morehouse (1994, p. 123) have highlighted the varying ways in which the insider-axis can be hard for researchers to identify themselves on:

The qualitative researcher’s perspective is perhaps a paradoxical one: it is to be acutely tuned-in to the experiences and meaning systems of others—to indwell—and at the same time to be aware of how one’s own biases and preconceptions may be influencing what one is trying to understand.

(Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 123)

Given the various means by which participants were accessed for this project, it is methodologically interesting to consider the occasions when an “insider” label could have applied, and when an “outsider” one could. To take one example, there were times when Living Wage Employers being interviewed requested information of internal Living Wage Foundation procedures that I knew the answers to, from separate data collection efforts with LWF staff, but could not answer. This is reflected in the following fieldwork diary excerpt:

[Participant's name]'s asked in today's interview what next year's Living Wage Rates would be and whether I knew them already (I didn't), and what the Foundation's next steps were likely to be in terms of specific projects and focus (which I *do* know about through projects already completed). This is not the first time this has come up during an interview with an LWE, and it feels strange to be in the position of being privy to sensitive information from one subset of participants that I cannot share with the other group, and to be treated as if I am an employee of the Foundation rather than an independent academic researcher in my own right. (field note)

At times such as this, it could be argued that interviews with case study employers and other Living Wage advocates were being approached from an insider perspective more than an outsider's, with internal awareness of operational issues that could affect other participants being known of. Such privileged knowledge made the idea that it was possible to be completely neutral during the data collection stage of this research untenable, and reinforces Rose's argument (1985, p.77) that "there is no neutrality. There is only greater or less awareness of one's biases. And if you do not appreciate the force of what you're leaving out, you are not fully in command of what you're doing."

A similar methodological consideration was my own personal involvement in activism efforts within my own university, specifically in publicly campaigning to encourage them to become an accredited Living Wage Employer in their own right via the same means that had been so successfully in persuading CSE1 to do so. The fieldwork diary note below considers the issues of bias and neutrality that these actions raise:

I've always been of the position that it's impossible for me to be completely unbiased as an investigator conducting this research, given that a) I no doubt had an interest in this area and a passion to contribute to it at least partly because of my own circumstances of upbringing, and b) "ensuring that people have enough money to avoid poverty" is an unavoidably emotive subject on which it is nigh on impossible to be neutral.

Nevertheless, our own recent efforts at UoL [University of Leeds] to try and persuade the employer to begin paying the Living Wage raise other issues of bias and neutrality, particularly given the similarity between this situation and the circumstances that led to [case study one] becoming accredited, i.e., the combined efforts of traditional trade

unions, Citizens UK, and mobilised workers exerting internal and external pressure on a university to pay the LW.

It is almost a re-enactment of one of my case study employers playing out in real time, facilitated by both the knowledge I've gained from being informed of previous campaigns at other universities, and the connections I have made through my fieldwork. Given that I already believe that it is not possible to claim that I am completely unbiased in my work as a researcher, then, perhaps the most logical approach is to just own this label of not being unbiased, and discuss it as simply another dimension of the dilemmas of empirical qualitative research. (field note)

While there are no “right answers” to the above considerations, it is always a useful exercise for academic researchers to consider such issues before, throughout, and after the data collection stage of any project, to be aware of one's own potential biases, standpoints, and judgements that may affect their research process in any way.

4.15. Ethical considerations

Social sciences researchers have a responsibility and duty of care to uphold when conducting any study involving human participants (Berg, 2004; Merriam, 1998; Pring, 2000), with each researcher responsible for both informing and protecting respondents to the fullest of their abilities (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2012). Yin argues that social scientists, through dint of their conducting of research in the field of “human affairs”, have a strict obligation to follow “important ethical practices akin to those followed in medical research” (2014, p.78), given the potential for harm that researchers can cause to human participants when ethical considerations have not been adequately built into a project.

This was particularly pertinent in a study such as this involving workplace practices and sensitive discussions such as wages with both workers and those that employ them, and the possibility of jeopardising in any way the position of those workers who participated in the project. Given the organisation-wide, dual worker/manager nature of this research, it was important to remain reflexive at all times of the power relations at play and the potential for causing harm of any kind to participants (particularly for workers), and to ensure that an “ethics of care” towards participants was central to the study (Tronto, 1994). This was equally true of my own role as a

collector and interpreter of the knowledge gathered from participants (Kvale, 2003), and the “subtle and unspoken relationship of power” (Funder, 2005) that existed from the nature of the academic-participant relationship. Brinkmann and Kvale remind us that:

The research interview is not an open, everyday conversation between equal partners. The interviewer has scientific competence, and he or she initiates and defines the interview situation, determines the interview topic, poses questions and decides which answers to follow up on, and also terminates the conversation. The interview is a one-way dialogue – the role of the interviewer is to ask, and the role of the interviewee is to answer.

(Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015, p. 37)

Mason’s pillars of qualitative research were also adopted as an approach to follow throughout this project, namely:

Qualitative research should be *strategically conducted, yet flexible and contextual*.

Essentially, this means that qualitative researchers should make decisions on the basis not only of a sound research strategy, but also of a sensitivity to the changing contexts and situations in which the research takes place.

(Mason, 2002, p.7)

This was also true of the need to remain aware of the role of the researcher in interpreting data and making decisions that impact the “voice” of participants throughout the thesis’ written outputs (Eide and Allen, 2005; Chandler, Anstey and Ross, 2015). This project accepts and agrees with Creswell’s contention that academic research cannot be completely separated from the historical-personal lens of researchers themselves (2007), and that “the positionality and subjectivity of the researcher(s) and the participants simultaneously shape the epistemological process, sometimes obfuscating the notion of voice in the presentation of the data and results” (Chandler, Anstey and Ross, 2015).

Such considerations become even more prescient when the field of investigation is one that could be considered particularly emotive and/or where the researcher could be subconsciously looking for positive insights from participants over any other kind of data, as could be the case when

exploring adoption and implementation of a measure such as the UK Living Wage, primarily designed to help lift people out of in-work poverty. Such concerns were prevalent throughout the research design and fieldwork stages of this project, reflected in the inclusion in a number of fieldwork research diary entries about the need to ensure that criticism of the Living Wage and the work of the Living Wage Foundation itself was not shied away from nor hidden in the final outputs of this research because of any concerns of harming a worthy cause.

All care was taken in ensuring that detailed information on the project's aims, objectives and intentions were provided to all participants in parallel with ensuring that informed written consent was given from all involved, and that they were made fully aware that they were under no obligation to take part in the research (as well as reminding them that they have the right to withdraw at any stage). Special attention was also given in ensuring that workers which agreed to be interviewed were not doing so under duress or command from their own employers (Berg, 2004), and that each was well aware of what the project involves before any interviews took place. Those sections of the thesis devoted to analysis and discussion of the impact of the Living Wage on organisations do not refer to individual workers by their names and/or publish any information that could help individually specify them, with all names anonymised.

All interview recordings and/or transcripts have been stored in line with the UK Data Protection Act, with all data stored on the University of Leeds secure drive, to ensure that it is protected by the University's own data confidentiality standards. Access to all data has been strictly limited to myself, and identifiable personal data on each participant interviewed where possible stored separately to interview data itself. All data from the project in its entirety will be destroyed after its secure retention for five years to ensure that the data confidentiality of participants is protected in perpetuity, in line with University of Leeds policy.

4.16. Ongoing reflection through fieldwork research diaries

The flexible nature of both case study research and the utilisation of semi-structured interviews in this project meant that it was possible to adapt and develop the focus of fieldwork flexibly throughout the data collection stage, as a greater level of understanding of the organisational impacts of the Living Wage and the work of the Living Wage Foundation came to be more fully understood. Mason (2002, p.24) argues convincingly that qualitative research is “characteristically exploratory, fluid and flexible, data-driven and context sensitive” that evolves

as it progresses, rather than adhering to “an entire advance blueprint”, an argument that this thesis finds favour with. Yin (1998) also emphasises the importance to a researcher’s skill set during the data collection stage of “an inquiring mind and the willingness to ask questions before, during, and after data are collected,” as well as the flexibility “not merely to record data but to interpret and react to these data once collected.” The adoption of this reflexive practice for this project is exemplified in this fieldwork research diary entry following a wide-ranging interview with the Human Resources Director at CSE1:

[Participant’s name]’s in-depth analysis of the wider ramifications of becoming a Living Wage Employer (in terms of job design, the potential to recruit a higher quality of candidate of worker *or* to put off suitable employees by intimidating them, the impact on an organisation’s gender pay gap statistics, and in a host of other areas mentioned) led me to believe that my understanding of the impact of Living Wage accreditation thus far is confined to the more obvious and visible changes: rises in staff retention rates, falls in sickness and absence leave, a higher level of employee engagement, etc. There is a need to probe participants on the wider changes rather than just these ones in interviews moving forward, with the impact that procurement strategies can have on subcontractors adopting Living Wage rates being a particularly interesting area to focus on in the future. (field note)

Another important insight was noted in the immediate aftermath of an interview with a policy consultant employed by the Living Wage Foundation:

The Foundation are already well aware of the criticisms that a singular focus on hourly rates of pay can mask other deficiencies in the treatment of low-paid workers within organisations, but are cautious about how to proceed in expanding their focus without disrupting their primary aim of convincing other employers to begin paying the Living Wage. In future interviews with LWF staff and other expert interviews, it would make sense to introduce a more extensive level of inquiry with regards to this larger agenda. (field note)

One of the most seminal moments in the life of this project was in the loss of two of the initial case study employers selected for empirical data collection efforts. These circumstances created a fieldwork scenario in which important decisions had to be made in very quick succession

within a short timeframe, but which ultimately resulted in a deeper and more complex level of data and insights to discuss in this thesis. It also created the beginnings of a lengthy process of deliberation in establishing an effective framework for grouping and managing such extensive levels of data in a workable fashion, articulated in this field note:

I can still utilise the data from the interviews already done with these employers, but the key puzzle to solve is in how to present and discuss their findings without including them as case studies in their own right, as well as ensuring that they do not overshadow the new *actual* case studies. They also give me additional perspectives on the experiences of other Living Wage Employers without being full cases in and of themselves, which could work to the project's advantage by helping to contextualise and provide a more extensive description and understanding of what happens when an employer decides to begin paying the Living Wage. So, it's a question now of data management and presentation, and figuring out how to talk about these employers and the data derived from them. (field note)

Personal reflections such as these became an invaluable part of the fieldwork as it continued, and there were a number of diary entries that became regarded as “turning points” following a particular interview or visit to an employer's workplace that yielded some critical insights into the research questions that this project is focused upon. This reinforces Burgess' view of the importance of fieldwork diaries in categorising and recording the “hunches and insights” that researchers develop “throughout the course of their research. . .If these ideas are kept on record it allows researchers to look at the ways in which social science concepts, professional concepts, and common sense/everyday concepts can be employed in the analysis of data” (1981, p.78).

In a similar fashion, Moon (2005) argues that fieldwork research diaries are an important means of the “reprocessing’ of ideas or knowledge in order to make sense of complicated or unstructured situations” as a rough, early form of data analysis while data collection is still occurring, informed by Gibbs' (1988) definition of this practice as “active learning’, i.e., learning by doing, facilitated by reflecting on what we are doing.” Research diary entries on interactions with the Living Wage Foundation have become a particularly (and rather unexpected) invaluable aspect of the project, as the timeline of this research has coincided with a gradual shift in the work of the Living Wage Foundation over the same time period towards a

more expansive focus which encompasses wider workplace issues such as the level of guaranteed hours for workers each week, and the existence of practices such as zero-hour contracts. These entries thus provide an important resource in themselves in mapping and understanding how the Foundation and its work have developed in recent years, as well as in which areas the body and wider Living Wage campaign is likely to move into in the future.

4.17. Concluding remarks

This chapter has outlined the research design and strategy followed in this project, along with a justification of the methodological approach, framework, and research methods utilised in exploring the research questions that underpin the study. It has provided a strong defence of case study research as a research methodology in and of itself, as well as on the suitability of an embedded case study approach for this study, and through a discussion of the nature of qualitative research of the appropriateness of a qualitative approach.

The importance of ongoing reflexivity for academic researchers throughout the life course of a project have been emphasised, particularly in the fieldwork stage. The invaluable rewards that the utilisation of fieldwork research diaries can provide have also been discussed, their value seen both in terms of data in and of themselves, as well as in their ability to provide an account of the research journey taken across a project's lifetime.

The necessity of being aware of ethical considerations concerning power dynamics, voice, and any potential harm to individuals through their participation in the project have also been discussed, as has the need to ensure that secure management of research data is in place both during and in the aftermath of a study as sensitive and extensive as this one.

4.18. Structure of empirical chapters

The following chapters are concerned with the empirical findings of the data collection stage of this project, with each individual chapter focused upon a separate aspect of the insights gathered in the data collection stage of this project:

- Chapter 5: The decision of case study employers to begin paying the Living Wage, and the motivations behind these decisions;

- Chapter 6: The wider impact of Living Wage accreditation, in terms of the consequences for subcontracted employment relationships and supply chain networks;
- Chapter 7: The impact of adoption of the Living Wage on workers themselves at those organisations explored for this project;
- Chapter 8: The evolution and role of the Living Wage Foundation, including its development to date, relationship with employers, and significance as an emerging actor within the industrial relations field.

Chapter 9 will bring these separate areas of analysis together in tandem with a discussion of the experiences of other Living Wage advocates with insights and expertise in this field of research, with case study findings compared and contrasted, and a wider understanding of the role of the Living Wage Foundation considered in relation to the extensive range of findings which this study presents.

Chapter 5: Employer motivations for adoption of the Living Wage, experiences of implementation

5.1. Introduction

This chapter is focused on the first research question of this project, namely “*Why do employers decide to adopt the Living Wage?*” It explores the decision to adopt the Living Wage by both the case study employers that this project is concerned with as well as through the experiences of a series of other organisations, and is primarily concerned with providing an in-depth understanding of the processes by which decisions are made by employers to adopt the Living Wage, of the necessary internal power dynamics that must be present within an organisation for such a decision to be made, and the wider influence of external actors in prompting such decisions. While in the majority of cases these external actors consist of the Living Wage Foundation and/or Citizens UK themselves, in a number of cases there are wider actors and influences at play, ranging from cultural concerns to concerted political pressure, in line with the stakeholder theory perspective of this thesis.

The divide in experiences between those employers who become accredited as the result of a Citizens UK campaign directed against them, and those who primarily do so through their own initiative and conversations with the Living Wage Foundation itself, are also highlighted. These two separate sides of the movement help illustrate the way that the Living Wage campaign operates across the employment landscape of Britain today, and by which processes and under which circumstances it is that organisations typically decide to become accredited Living Wage Employers.

This chapter argues that voluntary adoption and implementation of the Living Wage by employers can be understood not only through the influence of external actors such as the Living Wage Foundation, but through a comprehensive analysis of both the personal and business-orientated standpoints of the key individuals involved in making such decisions for an organisation. It contends that adoption of the Living Wage is contingent on internal support for the initiative by those individuals in a position to influence an employer’s decisions, that the specific role and position of said supportive individuals within a firm varies on a case-by-case

basis, and that without this critical source of internal support, an organisation is unlikely to commit to paying the Living Wage.

It also argues strongly that there is no uniform process by which an organisation decides to become a Living Wage Employer: while some experience a concerted, worker-driven public campaign to put pressure on them to accredit, others do so out of the independent initiative of ethically-minded individuals within an organisation, while others do so as a strategic decision to maintain important commercial relationships. And while it is central to understand the role of civil society actors such as Citizens UK and the Living Wage Foundation in promoting organisational change, it is of equal importance to analyse and understand an employer's internal power dynamics alongside this analysis, to demonstrate how and why such decisions are made, and how ethically-led organisational change occurs.

This chapter is structured as follows. It first compares and contrasts each organisation's initial awareness of the Living Wage and the Living Wage movement, before moving on to an exploration of the decision-making processes which led to each of them becoming officially accredited Living Wage Employers. An analysis of the moral and business case motivations given by those employers in interviews for this project then follows, including the role that the personal views and beliefs of those key individuals involved in facilitating internal organisational change play.

This chapter builds on the established literature within the field concerning both the evolution of the UK Living Wage movement, and of how and why individual employers voluntarily decide to become accredited members of the campaign (Wills, 2005; 2009; Coulson and Bonner, 2015; Heery, Nash, and Hann, 2017; Hill, 2019). The chapter also touches on the existing literature concerning how organisations make independent ethical decisions more widely, as well as in how they construct and craft their corporate social responsibility strategies (Trevino, 1986; Gaudine and Thorne, 2001; Jackson, Wood, and Zboja, 2013).

The focus and findings of this chapter are in agreement with Jackson, Wood, and Zboja's contention that "ethical decisions are, in the final analysis, made by individuals" (2013, p. 233), and that being aware of the individual contextual factors of each organisation is paramount in forming a clear understanding of how and why ethical decisions are made. This includes exploring the personal beliefs and ethics of key decision-makers; the existence (or not) of

particular actors within an organisation supportive of the initiative in question, which can help to encourage, facilitate, and in some cases, ultimately make ethical decisions themselves; the geographical and sector-based characteristics of an employer; and the particular circumstances of their interactions with external actors, which in turn can help influence the decisions that they take.

5.2. Adoption of the Living Wage

The following sections explore, compare, and contrast the experiences of the case study employers interviewed for this project, from their initial awareness of the existence of the Living Wage and the campaign itself, to their disparate motivations for ultimately deciding to become an accredited member of the Living Wage movement. The vastly differing circumstances of each employer's interaction with the movement, and their decision to accredit, further reiterate that there is no uniform process by which an organisation becomes a "Living Wage Employer."

Throughout the discussions included within this chapter the second research question of this project is also touched upon, namely "*what are the organisational impacts of implementation of the Living Wage?*" A fuller focus on this question is the remit of the next chapter of thesis, however.

5.3. Becoming aware of the Living Wage

This section explores the project's case study employer's initial awareness and interaction with the concept of the Living Wage, as well as their awareness of the specific campaign for the measure led by Citizens UK and the Living Wage Foundation. There is no universal experience of how organisations first interact with the campaign, and of the civil society encouragement for them to voluntarily raise their wages to compensate for the limitations of legal minimum wage rates, as prior knowledge of both the movement and the principle of living wages differs considerably from person to person, and employer to employer. Additionally, the degree to which an organisation experiences specific external pressure to pay the measure varies widely between the employers currently accredited with the Living Wage Foundation: a Premier League football club is much more likely to be campaigned at directly to pressure on them to pay it than a social care firm, for example, given the disparities in profit and wealth between them.

Many employers become aware of what the Living Wage is, and what the UK campaign for the Living Wage is promoting, through either their own relationships with other organisations, or through being targeted by the campaign itself. A consistent thread throughout data collection efforts for this study was that employers who become aware of the Living Wage and the voluntary nature of the movement through non-campaigning circumstances reacted much more positively to becoming a part of it, and that “shaming” organisations into becoming accredited was in some instances counter-productive.

In the case of the owner of case study employer two (CSE2), a holiday park in the South East of England, awareness of the existence of a campaign advocating the voluntary adoption of a higher minimum rate of pay came about through sheer circumstance “reading about it in an article in *The Guardian*,” rather than any specific external or workforce demands for action in this area. The holiday park’s Director, Sam, described the company’s initial reaction to the existence of the campaign as a source of opportunity to improve its organisation:

I just had a eureka moment. And the Living Wage was ten years old at the time and there were less than a thousand members. . . and I was thinking for a few extra pennies, I could have a brand that was going to improve my corporate social responsibility.

Sam, 2018

Of particular interest in these remarks is the clear awareness of the business case for becoming an accredited Living Wage Employer as an initial reaction, specifically of the reputational benefits that could be enjoyed by adopting the measure as part of the park’s “brand.” In the vast majority of other firms spoken to, awareness and experience of the organisational benefits of Living Wage adoption were something that came to be seen more clearly over time, rather than initially at the outset. CSE2, in contrast, presented an interesting case of the Director of an organisation having both a strong passion for corporate social responsibility in its own right, and a keen sense of the advantages to the company that could be accrued through advocating socially responsible policies and positions. The park was subsequently accredited as a Living Wage Employer in January 2014.

In contrast to this, CSE1, a university based in the West of the UK and with a workforce of over 5,000, became aware of the Living Wage and the campaign itself in a more direct way. The

university became accredited with the Living Wage Foundation in November 2014, following internal support for the Living Wage from key individuals within the university's management team, and a concerted joint effort by the local Citizens UK chapter and the university's own cleaners in publicly campaigning for them to do so. A two-pronged campaign to persuade its student union (categorised as an employer in its own right) to also become accredited continues to be fought at the time of writing, with both internal and external pressure being applied in different forms.

In CSE1's case, there were a myriad of independent attempts to unilaterally organise a living wage campaign across campus before Citizens UK began their own efforts: one by a "Labour Students" grouping of undergraduate students; another by a group of academics with a community organising background, and another by the student newspaper. The demands of these disparate groups had all been summarily dismissed by the university, before the regional chapter of Citizens UK began consolidating these pockets of support into a larger, more focused campaign. Interviewed for this thesis, the community organiser in charge of the campaign, Lee, identified that the successful reframing of the campaign into one around business ethics and corporate social responsibility was one of the key drivers in its ultimate success:

And what we did is turn it from academics saying 'oh we really think we should do this', and students saying 'oh we really think we should do this', and management saying 'well that's a nice idea, but no', to reframing it as essentially a litmus test of how the university engages with the community outside: because you employ so many people, how can you justify being a contributor towards poverty?

Lee, 2018

Lee also argued that the campaign being managed by Citizens UK itself was key to its success, as it was not an actor that the university was familiar with and able to easily dismiss the concerns of:

More importantly, it was who was asking, because they were doing it under the banner of Citizens, and that entirely changed the framing for the university. Because they know how to deal with student dissent, and they know how to deal with academic dissent: what they're less comfortable dealing with is when the wider community, particularly a very

diverse set of people, are saying “you’re not some tinpot employer, you’re a major employer in this city, and you should be doing better.”

(ibid.)

After coordinating the disparate internal movements within the university for the Living Wage under the Citizens UK banner, the campaign embarked on a number of high-profile direct actions on campus, dedicated to raising awareness among both the higher management levels of the university and its wider populace on the deprivation that their own workers were experiencing on a daily basis, as a result of the low wages that they were paid. Staff and students were encouraged to seek out their department’s cleaner(s) to let them know that they were appreciated, and that they were supported in their endeavours to be paid a Living Wage.

The campaign, organised cooperatively between the local Citizens UK chapter active in the region, the charity Oxfam, and university students and staff members themselves, all working together under the Citizens UK banner, employed a high-profile strategy of humanising those workers who would directly benefit from being paid the Living Wage, most notably cleaning staff, by utilising video testimony on the difference it would make to their lives. The Chief Operating Officer, Helen, noted that “we didn’t get trade union pressure at all, and I think that’s fairly typical. . . I don’t think the trade union movement have got behind the Living Wage,” an area of tension between civil society and industrial relations actors discussed in more detail in chapter 8 of this thesis.

Central to these campaigning efforts was convincing the workers themselves to stand behind and support the campaign, and to be actively involved in its actions. Lee recalled that this was difficult at times:

They felt beaten: nothing was going to change, no respect, things were only going to get worse for them, etc. And that was a struggle at times to get them to even do anything, they were very fearful, because even though things were crap, it was the only thing they had.

Lee, 2018

There was a key focus within this particular campaign on organising low-paid workers to fight for their interests, and to ensure that they rather than any external body or actor were central as

the campaign was launched and waged. This is one of the central tenets of the Citizens UK movement, and provides a stark contrast to those examples of employers within the Living Wage Foundation's accreditation network who have voluntarily accredited entirely under their own steam, rather than after being pressed to do so following the launch and/or threat of direct action from a Citizens UK-organised campaign against them (or indeed have done so following a series of conversations with the Living Wage Foundation).

The campaign at CSE1 is reminiscent of the individual campaigns which ran towards the beginning of the Living Wage movement, explored by Wills in her work detailing the process of the Royal London Hospital and Queen Mary, University of London deciding to adopt the Living Wage (2006, 2009). This is particularly true of the Queen Mary campaign, which also involved an alliance of students, academics, and Citizens UK organisers working together under one banner to apply pressure on the university to raise wages. As with CSE1, attention was also placed on the particular circumstances of the cleaners in order to secure a decision to uprate pay scales to the Living Wage.

Since the establishment of the Living Wage Foundation in 2011, the Living Wage movement has placed more of a focus on partnerships with employers over direct campaigns challenging them to accredit. The stark difference between these two approaches to growing the number of accredited Living Wage Employers is discussed more extensively in chapter 8, covering the establishment of the Foundation and the tensions between its own approach and that of its partnership with its parent body Citizens UK.

Within the CSE1 campaign, as a result of the efforts of this alliance of low-paid workers, students, supportive staff members, and Citizens UK community organisers themselves, awareness was successfully brought to key individuals within the upper echelons of the university management team of the need for higher wages, which the university duly raised to Living Wage rates (although did not immediately become affiliated with the Foundation itself as a fully accredited Living Wage Employer).

Lee recalled that after the university had agreed to pay the Living Wage, he had a meeting with the chair of the University's executive board, at which he saw a physical manifestation of the campaign's direct action on the chair's desk (more specific details of the campaign itself have been omitted to protect anonymity):

He said that they'd looked at it at one point and the difference between the Living Wage and the national minimum wage then was around a pound, and they thought "well what difference is a pound an hour going to make?" And the campaign had really brought home to him that yes, a pound may not be a lot of money to you, but if you had a 20% increase in your salary, would that make a difference? And when he saw it like that, it opened his eyes.

Lee, 2018

These comments demonstrate the contrast between the experiences of CSE1 and CSE2 in their awareness of the Living Wage movement, and the decision to accredit. At CSE2, the holiday park's director was in a position to be aware of the moral and strategic arguments for becoming a Living Wage Employer, without requiring an externally-led campaign to bring this to the senior management team's attention. In comparison, at CSE1, the size and breadth of the university's workforce required a concerted campaign focused upon the injustices of the university's stance as a contributor to in-work poverty in the local region to bring home the reality of this situation to those in a position to make changes (as well as to strategically tackle a reputational risk to the institution). This also illustrates the "moral detachment" (Tsing, 2009) that can arise from a large employer outsourcing its lowest-paid members of staff, typically cleaners, caterers, and security porters, and thus removing responsibility on themselves for the progressively lower wages they are paid, and the precarious contracts that they are employed on (Wise, 2013). These issues are discussed in greater detail in the next chapter of this thesis.

Lee summarised the focus of the actions at the university (and the wider Citizens UK ethos) as "what we're trying to do is bring people in power face to face with the people who are affected by the consequences of their decisions, and hear their stories," an aspect of persuading employers to accredit that is more important for some organisations to hear than others. Another organiser involved in the campaign, Sophie, expressed scepticism that many employers would ever admit that this was how they were persuaded to pay the Living Wage publicly, however: citing the results of Heery, Nash and Hann's 2017 survey of employer motivations for adoption, she argued that:

And what's interesting about their research, where almost none of them reported that they had done it because of a campaign, and I can look down the list of accredited employers

and think “hmmmm, you definitely did that because of a campaign.” And they might want to rationalise it afterwards as “oh we're good people and we did it for the right reasons,” but it’s often more complicated than that.

Sophie, 2018

As discussed in more detail in chapter 8, the dramatic evolution of the campaign for the Living Wage at this university, from disparate campaigns to a focused direct action one under the Citizens UK banner to eventual success, is not a typical process of how each individual employer decides to adopt the Living Wage, but it does reflect one of the key ways in which some organisations are persuaded to do so.

According to the Vice-Chancellor of the university, the process of discovering the concept of the Living Wage and its adoption was very straightforward:

I was appointed 14 months before I actually started . . . and I think it was about a year in that I discovered that we weren’t paying the Living Wage. And it just struck me that we should be, so I asked the Finance and HR Directors to look into it.

Vice-Chancellor, 2018

However, this brief account of events, in which the Living Wage was introduced without external pressure as a matter of course, at the personal direction of the Vice-Chancellor, omits the existence of a public Citizens UK-led Living Wage campaign applying external (and public) pressure for them to do so. As retold by another member of the senior management team, Isabel, it was an interaction between the Vice-Chancellor and one of the regional Citizens UK organisers of the campaign which first raised internal awareness of this issue at the highest level:

It began when our Vice-Chancellor went to a Citizens event, and [name of Citizens organiser], who is quite instrumental in the Living Wage in the area, cornered him and said that we didn't pay the Living Wage. . .so he knew more about us than we knew about us, which was slightly embarrassing! And the VC came back to us and said "do we pay the Living Wage, and if not why don't we?"

Isabel, 2018

The focus then shifted towards an internal consideration of whether or not to adopt the Living Wage, and the various options available to the university in choosing if and how to do so. A more extensive discussion of the adoption process itself is discussed in the next section.

In contrast to the multi-faceted public campaign experienced by CSE2, this project's third primary case study employer (CSE3), a construction firm in the North East of England, experienced an initial awareness and understanding of the Living Wage in a similar fashion to CSE1. Unlike the top-down organic discovery of the Living Wage and the accreditation process by the company's owner, however, it was the firm's Finance Manager, Paul, who first became aware of the movement, before suggesting it to the organisation as a potential option for them to consider. The organisation was formally accredited in November 2014, becoming the first company in the North East from the construction sector to gain Living Wage accreditation status.

The firm's director, Jim, explained the decision to accredit as a fairly simple one, encapsulating the moral case for adoption, the lack of take-up of the Living Wage by other employers in their particular region of the UK, and the lack of any viable internal arguments as to why its adoption could be detrimental to the organisation:

So, he brought it to our attention, we looked at it, we couldn't really see any viable argument not to do it, it seemed a great thing, and there seemed to be a big lack of take-up in the North East, so we wanted to be one of the standard bearers for the North East. And we thought it was the right thing to do.

Jim, 2018

The firm's Managing Director, Danny, had a similar view, recalling the prevailing attitude of the initial meeting convened to introduce the concept of the Living Wage to the organisation's board as one of general agreement:

[Paul] brought it up, we discussed it, and we all thought it was a positive in the first meeting. And then we went back and just looked through the numbers, the impacts, how to use it, how to develop it, how would we communicate it through the business, and so on. And it needed some careful discussion, but there were no negatives there.

Danny, 2018

This initial introduction of the Living Wage to CSE3's board, and its subsequent adoption by the firm, speaks to one of the wider themes of this project's findings: namely that the existence within organisations of highly motivated individuals who are supportive of the Living Wage are critical in encouraging employers to formally adopt the measure. Such individuals are likely to be in a position within their firms where their influence can help to drive organisational decision-making (being members of or having access to the firm's executive board, for example), but are not necessarily the directors/CEO's/owners etc. themselves. This can be seen in the cases of CSE1, where the Chief Operating Officer was widely considered to be the key person advocating for the Living Wage after the Citizens UK-led campaign brought the senior management team's attention to the issue of in-work poverty in such a public way; and in CSE3, where the Finance Manager of the firm proposed it.

The experiences of other employers interviewed for this project also help corroborate these findings. For example, at one retailer, the key individuals involved in putting the Living Wage on the agenda of the firm's owners were two senior members of the HR team, Kate and Mariah, who came across the existence of the Living Wage and the movement behind it while conducting research about various options to update the organisation's internal pay and benefits strategies:

So, we did our research, looked at our competitors, and then looked really closely with our finance team to come up with some different options, and while we were doing that, I came across the concept of the Living Wage. . . so we came up with five or six different scenarios to suggest [to the board].

Mariah, 2018

Kate explained that these separate scenarios did not all involve full accreditation:

Some options had elements of the Living Wage in it, such as paying the Living Wage in parts of the company more than others, and some didn't have it at all, but when [the owners] heard about the Living Wage, and understood what it was, they realised that morally it was the right thing to do. And the project changed from picking one of these scenarios to realising that "oh, they're *really* interested in the full Living Wage!"

Kate, 2018

This scenario presents a similar picture to that of CSE3, with ethically-minded individuals in key positions becoming aware of the Living Wage themselves, and being in a position to push forward its implementation as a potential option to the organisation's primary decision-makers (in this case, the company owners).

At other organisations, the Living Wage was built into the initial construction of the companies themselves. At one Swedish tech start-up firm in London, for instance, the suggestion to embed the Living Wage within the business from the beginning was suggested to the Head of Partnerships and Marketing, Alice, by the external body London and Partners (the international trade, investment and promotion agency for the city), with the principles of the Living Wage finding favour with the personal ethics of the firm's own key decision-makers:

For us, the Swedish values that [the firm] adheres to is something that we're very passionate about, and that is a transparent, fair, and flexible way of working. And London and Partners said to us "have you guys thought about being Living Wage accredited?" And we hadn't, but it totally makes sense. . . I mean in Sweden we're paying people well, obviously Swedish wages are higher anyway, but this totally makes sense.

Alice, 2018

This demonstrates the impact that other ethically-minded external actors beyond Citizens UK and the Living Wage Foundation can have on persuading individual organisations to become accredited, particularly when it aligns with the personal ethical standpoints of strategic decision-makers within a firm.

In a similar fashion, in 2017 a cleaning company was founded within the City of London around a core mission of challenging the low-pay culture of the cleaning industry itself, with workers being paid London Living Wage rates established as a non-negotiable part of the business from the very beginning. The establishment of the cleaning company as an organisation in its own right, in collaboration with a local church, was borne out of a practical desire to prove to the larger firms which dominated the cleaning sector that it was still possible to pay the Living Wage even in traditionally low-wage sectors such as cleaning, and still be a successful business. The managing director of the organisation, Joseph, described its establishment as an idea developed in conjunction with workers themselves:

It came from some research that the local parish had been doing with low-paid workers in their ward. And obviously their parish is full of City workers, and they had this narrative developing in their minds of 10,000 pinstripe suits coming to work at 8 in the morning at the same time as 10,000 low-paid cleaners are going home, and it's like two worlds that never meet . . . and The City doesn't work without them.

Joseph, 2018

Joseph explained how this narrative was then transformed into reality:

So, the question in the church was "what can we do for these guys?" And that's where the idea and the motivation came from . . . and through all of these conversations came the idea of "let's do an ethical cleaning company."

(ibid.)

As explained by the one of the firm's management board directors and original seed funders, Patrick, the primary rationale was to be both a symbolic and a practical representation of the alternative ways to exist and operate as an organisation within the cleaning industry:

And the idea that if we can do it, if we can just go into the marketplace and compete, win contracts, and pay the Living Wage, and pay decent terms and conditions, and deliver a good service, and be financially sustainable by making a profit, then we can turn around to the rest of the sector and say "well, it is possible." And challenge this idea that it can't be done, as we've just proven that it can be.

Patrick, 2018

Based on the findings discussed above, initial awareness of the Living Wage, then, cannot be said to be guided by a typical and uniform process within each organisation that decides to become accredited members of the Living Wage Foundation: each employer gains an awareness of the movement in their own way, with some being the focus of individually-focused campaigns highlighting the injustices of in-work poverty within the workplace, others championing it after discovering its existence during the course of their wider work on organisational benefits, while others build it into the very building blocks of their businesses themselves. These individual stories reinforce the wider arguments of this chapter, and indeed this thesis: that the circumstances of how each organisation come to begin paying the Living Wage are relatively

unique to each individual employer, and reliant on a wide variety of specific contextual factors and the interplay of a wide variety of stakeholders both within and external to an accrediting organisation, and the sector that they operate within.

5.4. The decision to accredit

This section explores the decision-making processes by which this thesis's primary case study employers formally adopted the Living Wage as company policy, and their subsequent accreditation with the Living Wage Foundation as official "Living Wage Employers." It highlights the different ways in which organisations make decisions, depending on their own unique internal structures and culture, and reinforces the wider theme of this chapter of the crucial role that dynamic and invested individuals play in facilitating organisational change at an executive level.

The decision to begin paying the Living Wage at CSE2 was ultimately sanctioned by the firm's company board, with the proposal put forward and strongly advocated to the board by the park's director, Sam. The process by which the decision was made was explained by Sam as follows:

At that board meeting when I talked to them about what we were paying the team, they were surprised at how little we were paying. Our business partner was saying that they've got a unionised workforce, and back then everyone was earning over £10 an hour. So, he and the board said "if the park can afford to, we want to do it."

(Sam, 2019)

Sam also expressed surprise that the board was supportive of the idea to accredit:

I was expecting to be told what a stupid idea, anyone can give money away. And actually, the board was very supportive and surprised at what we had been paying . . . So, I took comfort in that, and took the move to become an accredited Living Wage Employer.

(ibid.)

Two particularly salient points emerge from these remarks, the first being the continued trend within this project's findings of employers who have successfully adopted the Living Wage having an individual or a team that is particularly passionate about its implementation arguing

for it internally. The need for internal advocacy can perhaps be understood through the lens of the difficulty of changing the mindsets of organisations into considering the Living Wage as an opportunity rather than a cost, something discussed at greater length in forthcoming chapters.

The second point is the highlighting of the surprise that one of the board members present at the meeting expressed at the low rates of pay the non-unionised workers of the park were receiving. There is a strong body of evidence that demonstrates that decades of weakening trade union influence and membership numbers have weakened the capacity of workers to collectively demand higher wages, and that workers operating within workplaces without a trade union presence at all are at a particular disadvantage (Millward, Bryson and Forth, 2000; Simms and Charlwood, 2010; Bornstein, 2019). Indeed, the emergence and continued existence of the Citizens UK Living Wage campaign itself could be argued to be a direct symptom of the weakened ability of trade unions to secure wage rises to rates that enable workers to afford a decent standard of living, alongside the regulatory failure of legal minimum wage rates to accurately and consistently reflect the present cost of living in the UK on an annual basis.

Among all of the employers who are the focus of this thesis, it is only CSE1 which has an active trade union presence within it. And while a myriad of potential conclusions could be drawn from this fact, for example that perhaps those organisations without a union presence are more likely to be attracted to the Living Wage as a dramatic statement of support for their workforce, it is perhaps more likely that this simply reflects the wider makeup of the kinds of employers that the Living Wage accreditation network is made up of, with nearly three-quarters of currently accredited Living Wage employers being small and medium-sized enterprises with fewer than 50 employees (Johnson, Koukiadaki, and Grimshaw, 2019).

Despite CSE2's stated awareness of the moral and business case arguments for Living Wage accreditation status from the initial awareness of the concept and campaign, the park adopted a policy of "shadowing" the wage rates advocated by the Living Wage Foundation for a year before becoming formally accredited. This is a practice that a number of employers have come under criticism for over the past few years, in which organisations can enjoy the positive publicity and media coverage of becoming a "Living Wage Employer" for multiple years, without ever fully accrediting and having an obligation to follow the stipulations established by

the Foundation (most notably concerning payment of the Living Wage to outsourced staff as well as directly-employed workers).

The practice of making bold public statements about adopting the Living Wage, and then resisting the formal implementation of such pay rates, is an issue that transcends different industries within the UK labour market. Leeds City Council, for example, committed publicly to becoming a Living Wage Employer in 2015, but has consistently claimed since that existing legislation prevents it from becoming fully accredited as they “cannot legally insist that its suppliers pay above the national minimum wage” (Beecham, 2018), despite the accreditation of a number of other councils across the country proving this claim to be without merit.

Within the higher education sector, Birmingham University has also been criticised for similar actions, with one City of Birmingham MP, Liam Byrne, turning down an honorary degree from the institution in 2019 after arguing that “although the University has agreed to pay directly employed staff the real Living Wage, there appears to be an issue with contractors which is stopping the University becoming a Living Wage employer” (Byrne, 2019). This is an issue that touches upon many of the central tenets of this thesis, particularly the reputational benefits of the Living Wage and the central role of supply chain management and subcontracted employment policies in encouraging (or actively fighting against) higher wages and working conditions.

For CSE1, the journey towards accreditation occurred in a piecemeal fashion, with the initial public campaign for the university to begin paying the Living Wage succeeding first in raising the rates of core university staff, then subcontracted staff, and finally resulting in the full accreditation of the university as part of the Living Wage Foundation’s accredited employer network itself. A critical component in ensuring that each of these decisions followed the other was the continuation of the campaign by the local Citizens UK chapter and members of the university (both staff and students) in raising awareness of the existence and impact of the Living Wage thus far, and the measure’s importance for university workers. Video testimony involving individual university cleaners discussing the difference it had made to their lives was produced and shared widely, and a public celebration was launched to celebrate the university’s initial move towards paying its own staff and subcontracted cleaners Living Wage rates, to encourage it to then move towards accrediting as a Living Wage Employer. The importance of this approach

was highlighted by a number of those interviewed for this project, most notably the HR Director, Sarah:

One of the powerful ways that Citizens approaches it, is that they bring it back to the individual, to the individual's story. When we committed, we got cards from the cleaners . . . and the one I always quote is the one about the cleaner whose kid was going to be able to go on a school trip for the first time. And we're about education, and if we can do something that makes a difference . . . that's what we should be doing, as part of our civic mission.

Sarah, 2018

It was during this time, between the university committing to paying the Living Wage to both its own staff and to any subcontracted workers within the cleaning team (the primary focus of the public campaign), that the Head of Policy, Reward and Employee Relations for the university, Richard, was asked to review the options available to the organisation in moving forward with a wider implementation of the Living Wage:

So, when I started to get involved, it was post-here, after the contractors had their campaign and were receiving the Living Wage rate. And then I was asked to look at, "OK, that's one small group there: what would it mean if we did this across the university?"

Richard, 2018

These three options were then presented to the University Executive Board (consisting of the Vice-Chancellor, the Pro Vice-Chancellors, and the heads of each administrative department) to make a decision. In the words of a senior member of the HR Team, Amelia, the options were as follows:

Don't do anything, and leave the cleaning contractors [the focus of the initial campaign] as just a local arrangement; look at mirroring the Living Wage, but not becoming accredited; and the becoming-fully-accredited option.

Amelia, 2018

At this juncture, it is important to note that there is a distinct difference between an employer agreeing to pay the Living Wage, and to becoming an officially accredited "Living Wage

Employer” with the Foundation itself. Formal accreditation involves an explicit acceptance of adhering to the full range of the guidelines of LWE status, including a promise to raise wages in line with the rates set out each November for the following financial year, along with the compulsory payment of the Living Wage to all contracted and subcontracted staff, which can be a difficult decision for many organisations to take. One member of the university’s HR team, Derek, admitted that they had felt a considerable level of unease at the idea of what amounts to the subcontracting of their internal pay policies to an external actor by accrediting, stating that “I mean I really like control, so I was very nervous about the accreditation bit.” The Citizens community organiser in charge of the CSE1 campaign, Lee, also recalled one member of the university’s senior team stating at one point in the campaign that “oh we can't do this Living Wage thing, because we can't give an external organisation control of our wages policy.”

As discussed more in chapter 8, the three options presented to the University Executive Board have all at some point or another been considered and implemented by a number of other organisations, with some employers even becoming fully accredited before moving back towards a less committed level of Living Wage adoption. Full accreditation can bring both risks and rewards for those considering it, with the risks of such a move highlighted by Richard, the university’s Head of Policy, Reward and Employee Relations:

The risk . . . is that we no longer have control over the pay costs for that group of staff. And so that was a bad thing, this was quite an important piece: and we could always leave, but the bad press of leaving, of no longer being an accredited member, is obviously much more damaging than if we'd had a much more low-key approach of matching, and then at some point that match didn't work.

Richard, 2018

Such apprehension was also highlighted by the HR Director, Sarah:

It's the anecdotal notion of "you don't have control over where it could increase to." So, depending on how close your structures are, how you operate your own pay structures within that business, it can be problematic. And while you may feel "yes, of course we would like to adopt it now," does that mean in three years that it could potentially cause problems?

Sarah, 2018

Richard also argued that such concerns “are why I think some universities talk about saying that “we’ll match it, but won’t necessarily become accredited Living Wage Employers.” These concerns reflect the fact that while organisations can enjoy significant reputational benefits by becoming accredited Living Wage Employers, by doing so they are also at risk of inflicting considerable damage on their public image if they remove themselves from the network at a future date.

This touches on Johnson, Koukiadaki, and Grimshaw’s (2019) criticisms of the public nature of the Living Wage Foundation’s accreditation structure as being an “important but partial” solution in tackling in-work poverty in the UK, particularly given the limited scope of the measure in working in conjunction with other wage-setting mechanisms within Britain. It may also explain why more employers have not become fully accredited members themselves, despite already fitting the criteria of the Foundation’s guidelines for organisations. These issues are discussed at greater length in chapter 8, along with the wider criticisms and challenges that have emerged as a result of the Foundation’s stringent (and publicly-facing) accreditation model.

One consistent theme that emerged through interviews with the university management team at CSE1 was an admission that after they had first been made aware of the Living Wage and the campaign for the institution to pay it, there was a reluctance to believe that it was needed. This came from a belief that that the employment conditions for staff members were already considerable, and that the payment of Living Wage rates on top of the current terms and conditions that workers enjoyed was unnecessary. The university’s Chief Operating Officer, Helen, recalled thinking that:

We also looked at it in terms of the fuller package that the university was offering, because we have very generous terms and conditions, so we were very borderline on the actual payment. But we had very . . . if you actually calculated the cost of our package, we were well over the Living Wage.

Helen, 2018

Another member of the HR team, Tim, argued similarly that:

The campaign came back to us and said "do we pay the Living Wage, if not why don't we?" And we said that well we more less pay the Living Wage, because we have a 35-

hour week, and you put that against the standard spine . . . it would get you the Living Wage.

Tim, 2018

Nevertheless, all those interviewed within the HR team stated that once they had dispelled these assumptions and began looking into the administrative details more closely, they began to change their minds on whether or not the Living Wage would be an effective wage-setting mechanism to adopt:

We said "well we don't have a problem." And then we made some inquiries. . . And when we started looking into it, and we looked at the profiles and the numbers, we could then see that there was movement that we could make in order to become a Living Wage Employer.

(ibid.)

One key difference discovered, discussed in greater detail in the forthcoming chapter of this thesis, was that while a move towards the Living Wage would make only a degree of difference to contracted university staff, the impact it would make for subcontracted workers was much more significant, with one member of the HR team (Amelia) stating that "it was much more significant for the contractors than our internal changes, which were negligible at that point." The Chief Operating Officer, Helen, recalled that:

For the contractors it was something like a 30 per cent wage increase. And it was shocking, actually, and I remember beforehand saying "we don't have a problem, I don't see what the fuss is all about". Then we suddenly had a real problem . . . and I think it's that element of the story for me, that has made me prepared to say "people need to pay the Living Wage."

Helen, 2018

Another concern regarding full accreditation was a consideration of exactly which workers the Living Wage would benefit, and whether it was indeed necessary for all staff to receive it, given that not everybody being paid Living Wage rates of pay would be relying on it as their primary income or means of financial survival. In the words of the Head of Policy, Reward and Employee Relations, Richard:

Some of the challenges back then were “well why are we doing this, because if the Living Wage is meant for someone in employment to be able to have a good standard of living, is that same philosophy being applied to a student who's just doing three hours?” Because this money is never going to be what they're going to live on, it's just an additional source, so is that same principle still behind it? And it was just one of the pros and cons when we did the original business case, something that we thought about.

Richard, 2018

Eventually, however, strategic thinking began to move towards full accreditation as a means of ensuring that payment of the Living Wage was universal across the institution, with the argument summarised by the HR Director, Sarah, that, “for the university it was just, we just want to make this quite clear: absolutely everyone gets it, so the VC can go out when he wants to and say that quite easily.” The inherent logic within this decision was a recognition of the reputational risks that an employer calling itself an official “Living Wage Employer” was vulnerable to if it was publicly found that there were gaps within this coverage, as explained by Helen:

It's either do it or don't do it, because then you suddenly create the conditions for things to be missed, so that it's actually just not worth it. And that was always my opinion, that in honesty my biggest fear after implementing it was that someone was going to pop up and say "you've just launched and had this big splash, but hang on I'm not getting the Living Wage!" So it was how do we make sure that we fully understand what everybody is getting, our different contractual arrangements, what people are doing for local arrangements, etc.

Helen, 2018

Nevertheless, following consideration of each of the above options, the University Executive Board decided to sign up as a fully accredited Living Wage Employer, rather than settling for a local arrangement or an agreement to mirror Living Wage rates that may prove publicly embarrassing if any omissions in agreements came to light. These concerns reflect the inherently hazardous nature of an employer publicly committing itself to any externally-enforced accreditation scheme, and that the potential for reputational benefits through such moves also

carries with it a distinct level of risk that an organisation's public image could be damaged rather than enhanced.

Given the similarities in size and the lack of a concerted campaign encouraging them explicitly to accredit, the decision to adopt the Living Wage at CSE3 has similar undertones to that of CSE1: namely that the decision was made by an executive board broadly supportive of the idea, after being made aware of what the Living Wage was and why it was considered as beneficial to the firm by one individual passionate about the idea within the organisation (in this case the Finance Director, Paul). The firm's Director, Jim, described a situation where the board were in broad agreement over the Living Wage from the first meeting, followed by a process before formally adopting it of planning how exactly it would impact the company at separate organisational levels:

[Paul] brought it up, we discussed it, and we all thought it was a positive in the first meeting. And then we went back and just looked through the numbers, the impacts, how to use it, how to develop it, how would we communicate it through the business, how the information and the feedback that the operatives would feel about it, and so on. And it does need some careful discussion, but there were no negatives there.

Jim, 2018

When discussing the process by which the decision was made to become a Living Wage Employer, the firm's Managing Director, Danny, also alluded to the broader business case of the measure being a means of investing greater resources within an organisation's workforce:

Like everybody else you've got to be commercially responsible, and have to view how it impacts on your business. But there's a number of ways of measuring that, and we measured that with not so much the direct commercial impact, but more just what you get in terms of your valued workforce, and the additional responsibilities they then feel that they're becoming part of your business, if you like.

Danny, 2018

Danny also expressed disappointment that so many other employers that he had spoken to about accreditation could only perceive the decision to pay the Living Wage from a narrow commercial perspective:

I think that's been my somewhat disappointment when we've talked to other businesses at and around that, everyone's just looked at it purely as a commercial issue, and made their decisions in a negative way based on the commercial impact on the business.

(ibid.)

These comments further underline one of the central themes of this chapter, namely of the need for internal advocacy for the Living Wage within an organisation in order for it to ultimately take the decision to accredit. As part of CSE3's decision to become accredited, the firm also made the unilateral choice to extend payment of Living Wage rates to their apprentices, something not specifically required by Living Wage Foundation accreditation guidelines. The Finance Manager, Paul, stated that this was a decision made to ensure that apprentices also felt like part of the organisation, regardless of age or experience, and that the choice to do this created a virtuous cycle where the firm experienced a reputational boost for treating their apprentices with respect, which can translate into attracting a higher quality of candidate:

And that's made a difference to our apprentices. So, our apprentices become workers.

And what that means is we become an employer of choice, and we get well known, and, we get people coming to us. So, you know, we've whittled our latest interviews down from 100 plus to 36 for interviews, interviewed 36, and taken on 10.

Paul, 2018

This decision and its organisational impact have similar undertones of the recruitment benefits that CSE3 have also enjoyed through being preferred by local agency workers as a firm to work for following their adoption of the Living Wage, and their treatment and payment of the Living Wage to both permanent employees and subcontracted construction workers. It demonstrates one of the ways by which adoption of the Living Wage can have wider consequences for a larger proportion of workers than only those within the specific organisations implementing the measure, providing a clear example of one of the ways in which an employer can promote higher wages and working conditions through changes to its procurement and subcontracted employment policies, and the ways in which it approaches supply chain management. These issues, and the experiences of CSE3 within this area, are discussed more extensively in the next chapter of this thesis.

Adoption of the Living Wage by UK employers, then, cannot be said to be guided by a typical and uniform process, but varies widely depending on both the specific internal decision-making processes of an organisation, and the existence and actions of certain individuals within them who are supportive of becoming a Living Wage Employer. This is perhaps even more essential for a decision such as voluntarily deciding to raise wage rates, a choice that for some organisational decision-makers may be seen as an unnecessary and expensive course of action where the costs of adopting the Living Wage are more apparent to see than its benefits.

To counter internal opposition to accreditation within organisations who are considering the measure, dynamic individuals who can put forward the moral and business cases for adoption can help to change mindsets. Rossiter & Lilien (1994, p. 68) have argued that “the production of high-quality creative ideas can be regarded as essential to the survival of most companies and organizations,” and the inclusion of employees who possess the ability to see decisions and paths forward in different ways, and crucially are also in positions where they can influence these decisions, are invaluable to employers.

When such individuals do not exist within an organisation, the likelihood of the Living Wage becoming adopted appears to be much slimmer. For example, Danny, the managing director of CSE3, alluded to the fact that the Living Wage had only been adopted within their own firm because of the differences between a typical Finance Director and their own:

And I think [Paul] is perhaps unique, in that he's an accountant at heart, who looks at it in a different way. Because most, certainly larger companies, are led by the finance manager or the finance director, in terms of recommendations as to how to spend any extra money. And it comes down the nose and it's a resounding no! But he sees it differently.

Danny, 2018

These differences in mindsets do not appear to be a simple split between the moral and business case arguments for the Living Wage, but in many cases a lack of strategic awareness of the longer-term benefits for an organisation that adoption could potentially provide, beyond existing as a clear and present wage-setting mechanism that can help ethically-minded employers alleviate in-work poverty rates across the UK and within their own workforce. These include a consideration of the potential for an improvement in recruitment and retention rates, for example,

or an external reputational boost for the employer, rather than simply being concerned about a higher wage bill.

The park manager for CSE2, Paul, argued that “it is about mindsets, it is about you seeing wages not just as a cost, there will always be a cost, but they’re actually a good cost and they’re an investment.” Similarly, the park’s HR Officer, Samantha, stated that other local holiday parks who have not accredited “just don’t look at the benefits properly.” Without dynamic individuals in place with the insights and influence to offer a different point of view, then, alongside a diffusion in organisational decision-making processes that allows alternative voices and arguments to be heard, it is less likely that other individual organisations will also decide to voluntarily adopt the Living Wage.

5.5. Motivations for accreditation

This section explores the project’s case study employers’ primary motivations for adoption of the Living Wage, and their subsequent accreditation with the Living Wage Foundation as official “Living Wage Employers.” It first discusses findings from those interviewed within each employer on the moral case for implementing higher rates of pay, before moving on to the business case for adoption that decision-makers within each organisation made in interviews for this project, along with a discussion on wider motivations and the influence that specific external actors can have on their decision.

5.6. The moral case for adoption of the Living Wage

There was almost unanimous support for the idea of a strong moral case for adoption of the Living Wage within those organisations interviewed for this project. The Director of CSE2, Sam, gave two parallel reasonings for the park’s motivation to advocate for and ultimately adopt the Living Wage as organisational policy: a moral case, grounded in their own personal ethical standpoints, and a business case, tying the impact of implementing higher rates of pay to directly observable benefits to the firm and its workforce.

The moral case for the Living Wage largely rested on two parallel philosophies: an employer’s responsibility to their own workforce, and a wider duty to take action in the face of ever-widening income and wealth inequality at both local and national levels. Sam argued that “to say that you’re working at a place and we’re paying the real Living Wage, for me, it sits right

because that's where I am . . . that, you do actually care for your workers," and that "no employer would feel good thinking their staff have to go to a food bank on the way home." The park's Finance Officer, Emily, expressed similar sentiments, arguing that investing in a workforce through higher wages was in about basic fairness:

Now don't get me wrong, I'm very penny pinching in a lot of other respects, but I'm quite happy for [the park] to be spending more money on our staff. It's only fair. Its scandalous what people get away with paying people.

Emily, 2018

That employers have a responsibility to pay their workers a decent wage was an argument supported by Living Wage workers within the park, too. One, Ros, argued that "if businesses can afford to pay it, then yes, they should be paying it," and another, Ruth, that "the cost of renting around here" should be factored into employer's considerations when making wage-setting decisions.

It was also suggested by Sam that the moral case for employers to pay the Living Wage was more pressing for those organisations operating in geographical areas with a high degree of wealth, such as the affluent South East of England region where CSE2 is based:

Why should [this area] be an excuse for low pay? You'll be saying well if you've got a premium brand and your location is a premium brand location, how come none of that is getting to the workers? How come [this area] is a low wage economy when actually in terms of tourism and hospitality, it's a premium location?

Sam, 2018

These comments support a wider concept of financial fairness than simply ensuring that workers can afford a decent standard of living, as the argument for voluntary adoption of the Living Wage is typically framed and promoted. There is a strong contention here that workers should be able to enjoy and be better recognised for their role in contributing to the geographical success of the area that they work in, and an opposition to the paradoxical idea that a region that attracts visitors with a considerable level of wealth should also be operating as a disproportionately low-wage economy.

The moral case for adopting the Living Wage was also an argument put forward widely by those interviewed for this project within CSE1. The Vice-Chancellor of the university, who possessed ultimate responsibility for the measure's adoption, emphasised the deserving nature of the workers who would benefit from higher wages the most:

And my reason for it really was fundamentally a moral one. . . I don't want to be too grand about it, but these are people who are getting up at four in the morning and doing three jobs, and we shouldn't be squeezing them out.

Vice-Chancellor, 2018

The HR Director, Sarah, similarly explained the reasoning for the decision as such:

While from a purely business point of view, the middle option of matching (but not accrediting) may have been the safest, the actual ethical benefits and the wider benefits of the Living Wage, beyond just the pay and purely cost implications, we all agreed on, and so we pushed it forward.

Sarah, 2018

Another senior member of the HR team, Mark, spoke about the fact that once an awareness of the impact on individual workers' lives of the Living Wage had been highlighted to them, specifically through the Citizens UK campaign video testimony from cleaners after the initial local agreement within the university to uprate pay rates, consideration of full accreditation transformed from a business-orientated task into a moral argument, which in turn made the risks of doing so feel much less insurmountable:

When I saw the videos, what was a theoretical exercise at first became something very different, and I think if you get those people and you get those messages in your head, all the rest about costs and everything don't go away, but they seem surmountable, which is the difference.

Mark, 2018

This speaks to the impact that social mobilisation and campaigning tactics can have on those at the receiving end of campaigns, and of the power of personal testimony and empirical examples in helping people understand the issues being raised. Another member of the senior management

team, Jody, summarised her own thoughts on the process as simply “we did it because it was the right thing to do, not because we'd see a direct business benefit.”

At CSE3, the ideas behind the decision to adopt the Living Wage appear to have been similar to that of CSE2: that there was a strong ethical case for its implementation, but also a keen awareness at the outset of the advantages that the firm could enjoy from paying it. The company's Managing Director, Danny, argued that the driving principle behind the firm's adoption of Living Wage rates was that “the Living Wage fits within how we treat people, because if you like it's an ounce of recognition of how we care for and respect our people,” and that “it needs to fit as part of a wider ethical stance.” The firm's Finance Director, Paul, expanded on this framework of corporate social responsibility, stating:

The Living Wage sits within a suite of things that we do, it's part of our ethical approach to business. And I think that's important to employers to understand, is that you can't have the Living Wage in isolation, it needs to be part of a demonstration of your responsibility as human beings, and as businessmen.

Paul, 2018

The sentiments of what the firm itself stands for in terms of its business practices were expressed in similar ways:

We will not race to the floor on a tender, and that's part of this calculation of "best value." And that lets us down sometimes, and we would rather not do a contract then try and race to a price, because what's the point? We all know how to act decently; it's about making the choice to act in a proper manner.

(ibid.)

Among other employers interviewed for this project, the moral case for adoption of the Living Wage was also a paramount consideration raised regularly. George, the Facilities Manager of one major consultancy firm in Britain who was the key individual within that firm responsible for facilitating their own adoption of the Living Wage (showing again the importance of “Living Wage champions” within an organisation), provided a succinct moral and business explanation for their own implementation of the voluntary measure:

Why did we do it? it fits with our values, it fitted with us, and it was motivational for our staff, who were very proud of everything we were doing with it and around it. But we were also able to see the benefits in terms of the posts of cleaners and receptionists, which helped us be able to articulate the benefits.

George, 2018

For another retailer who adopted the measure, it was argued by the firm's senior HR officers, Kate and Mariah, that the most important aspect was a moral decision based on trusting the Living Wage Foundation's calculations that these wage rates were required for their workers to be able to afford a decent standard of living:

For us the most important bit, to message to our teams to help them understand what those increases were worth, and how that was calculated, as in "we don't just want to pay more than Lush or Top Shop," it was more "this is how much you need to live," so it wasn't a business decision it was more that morally, it's a good benchmark for us to stick with.

Kate, 2018

The director of one accredited home care firm in London, James, also argued strongly that there was more of a moral imperative for employers to adopt the Living Wage in industries such as social care, where workers often work alone:

But why we felt that the Living Wage movement was a movement worth getting behind, I think again this comes down to morality. Because care services, you want them to be moral organisations, especially home care, because it's a lone worker job. So, you want to make sure that members of the staff belong to an organisation which cares about them, too.

James, 2018

In a similar vein to the sentiments expressed by the London-based cleaning firm discussed in more detail above, the rationale of accreditation for James was to challenge conventional wisdom that certain traditions and norms perpetuating in-work poverty within a particular sector were already established, and simply could not change:

And our general view in why we were setting this place up is we felt that the reason care is so bad in this country . . .they'll always tell you that care is bad, and that is the reality . . . and I had not had someone without any agenda say to me that care is good here. And so, we felt that was the root cause of real labour exploitation.

(ibid.)

It is notable that so many of the decision-makers discussed above expressed well-considered personal philosophies of what corporate social responsibility meant to their own organisations and to themselves personally, and that many of those responsible for making the decision to adopt the Living Wage had spent time clarifying their own thoughts on what they believed the role of businesses in society to be. This speaks to the fact that the Living Wage in itself is not a singular policy operating in isolation within many accredited organisations, but rather just one tool in a wider corporate social responsibility strategy, and in many cases a concrete reflection of the internal decisionmaker's own personal ethical standpoints and beliefs.

The above perspectives on the moral case for adoption of the Living Wage demonstrate that within those organisations who have become officially accredited Living Wage Employers, there typically exist particular individuals within the upper management team who have clear ideas on the ethical case for its implementation, and on the wider role of businesses within society to contribute to the social good. This is corroborated in Heery, Nash and Hann's 2017 survey of UK Living Wage Employers, wherein the top two motivations for accreditation were listed by firms as "social responsibility" and "organisational missions/values" (2017, p.9). Similarly, Werner and Lim (2016, p. 443) have argued that "the decision to pay a Living Wage may arise from a company's ethos, or sense of responsibility," and note that some of the most vocally supportive accredited Living Wage Employers are also those who consider paying it "as just one aspect of creating good working conditions for their staff" (ibid), conclusions also reinforced in the findings of this project.

Nevertheless, they also highlight that these employers "may still find it important to make reference to the business case, to justify to themselves and others that paying a Living Wage makes 'good business sense,'" or indeed to also have just as clearly considered thoughts on the business benefits as well as the moral imperative for accreditation in order to justify the decision to voluntarily uprate their internal pay scales in such a publicly accountable manner.

5.7. The business case for adoption of the Living Wage

All three primary case study employers explored through this research believed that there was a strong business case for the Living Wage, providing extensive examples of the organisational benefits that had occurred as a result of adopting the measure. The director of CSE2, Sam, was frank about the fact that in deliberating whether to adopt the Living Wage, the potential benefits to the organisation itself were acknowledged and factored into the decision in addition to the moral case for adoption, stating that “I did it for my corporate social responsibility, my feel good . . . I’m actually doing lots of other things, and it was something for the staff,” and that one of the reasons for becoming accredited was that “I could have a brand that was going to improve my corporate social responsibility.”

The focus on the reputational benefits of Living Wage accreditation is one of the most referenced organisational impacts in those arguing that there is a strong business case for the measure, with “reputation as good employer” and “enhanced overall reputation” also being listed by employers as the top two primary business-orientated motivations for accreditation following corporate social responsibility principles (Heery, Nash and Hann, 2017). The Living Wage Foundation itself also place a considerable amount of emphasis on the boost in public image that can result from employers becoming accredited in their efforts to persuade organisations to become Living Wage Employers, particularly through their bestowing to all LWEs of official plaques demonstrating a firm’s accreditation status that can be displayed in public areas of a business and on their website, demonstrating their ethical credentials in a highly visible way to attract potential ethically-minded customers (Living Wage Foundation, 2020).

When asked if workers at CSE2 felt that there was a strong business case for the Living Wage, there was strong agreement. One, Ros, argued that when a business becomes “money driven and not people driven. . . I don’t know how they can survive”, while another, Kayleigh, stated that by paying the Living Wage “you can expect a good day’s work out of your staff.” Another, Evelyn, linked the move to paying the Living Wage as a means of improving a business at a wider level, arguing that “you can always work a degree more efficiently. . . if you start on the Living Wage you can implement those improvements because people will start talking, investing, and coming along with you.”

The park's Finance Officer, Emily, made a direct link between the impact of the Living Wage as a tool for investing in a high-quality workforce, and the commercial benefits that results from having such a workforce, arguing that "so much of our income and staff is from repeat business, and to get repeat business, you've got to be selling a good service. And if you're selling a good service, you've got to have good staff."

One particular strand of the business case reasoning for adopting the Living Wage that came through in interviews at CSE2 was that an extra investment in workers is less of a cost, and viewed more as an opportunity to improve the business. A number of comments were made about the organisational improvements that an employer can enjoy by investing in their workers, and having that investment returned in kind to them via increased rates of retention and a higher standard of work. The park's Bookings Director, Tanya, suggested that the key to an organisation's success is "about getting our investment as workers," with the Finance Officer Emily arguing that actions like voluntarily adopting the Living Wage and other non-financial attempts at teambuilding help to create an organisational culture where workers feel more invested both in their own work, and the wider organisation's success:

There's a lot not just about the money, but actually what [the director] does here is he creates this culture with what people are paid. Everybody is invested in this business, and you can see that . . . they almost feel a personal involvement in the business, so I think it actually comes down to not even just the money side of it, but actually the heart and soul of the business really.

Tanya, 2018

The park's Director, Sam, summarised their own position on the importance of worker investment thusly, as well as expanding on a personal belief that many organisations who are not succeeding are in such a position precisely because they are blaming their own workforce for their limitations, rather than taking responsibility for their decisions as leaders:

And actually, the reason they can't pay their staff is because of the mistakes they're making in their business . . . I'll talk about how I market, how important the team is, how you've got to build your team, how important the real living wage has been to me. How you need to be good within your community, and valued.

Sam, 2018

There is an awareness in these remarks of the need for employers to not just invest in their staff and the wider community, but also to effectively communicate these actions to the wider public, to ensure that such actions translate into a reputational boost for the organisation itself.

Both workers and the Director of the park also expressed a strong sense of surprise and even confusion at the lack of other holiday parks in their local area deciding to become accredited Living Wage Employers themselves, as it gives their own organisation what one worker, Kayleigh, called “a clear run” at being seen as a socially responsible destination for potential customers to holiday, and an almost-unique means of attaining both a higher profile in the public consciousness, and an enhanced level of attractiveness to jobseekers within the park’s local labour market. The Director argued that “it was crazy” that local competitors had not seen the reputational benefits that could be enjoyed by deciding to accredit, with another worker, Evelyn, saying that if they could not see the business benefits themselves than the park “leading by example rather than shoving it down their throats” could at least lead to more incremental change over time.

While all those interviewed within CSE1 emphasised the moral case for accreditation as the most compelling, they also expressed an awareness of the business benefits that becoming a Living Wage Employer could bring, particularly in terms of an enhancement of the university’s public reputation. The Chief Operating Officer, Helen, made an argument in particular that at a time when universities in the UK are being strongly criticised for the high pay of their Vice-Chancellors and senior management team, becoming an accredited Living Wage Employer makes a strong statement about the kind of institution that they are:

If you think about it simply in political terms, rather than in financial terms, all this kerfuffle about VC pay, it is such a strong statement of "look we're a really good employer, we do this for our directly employed people, and even ensure that our contracted cleaners get the Living Wage, and we have a proper way of managing pay." And to me, that's a good line!

Helen, 2018

The HR Director, Sarah, agreed with this assessment, arguing that paying the Living Wage can help shield a university from criticisms surrounding high executive pay:

It does help in media inquiries: we are subject to Freedom of Information requests, and we get a lot of challenges on senior pay and low pay, but basically, it's good to be able to come in and say "yes, there is that, but we also support our lower-paid, we have the Living Wage, we're accredited, we implement it, we've made a commitment to this." That kind of acts like a balance, in terms of those two ratios.

Sarah, 2018

The Head of Policy, Reward and Employee Relations, Richard, also made a strong case for the Living Wage in terms of the “psychological contract” it instils between an employer and its workers, arguing that their hope is that workers reflect that "it makes me think that the organisation respects me . . . And I think that's why, if you can do it, you should.” This is a theme that is discussed more extensively from the perspective of workers themselves in chapter 7 of this thesis.

Despite this awareness of the business benefits of accreditation, there was still a strong sense from those interviewed that the Living Wage was part and parcel of a wider package of already-strong employment conditions within the university. One senior member of the HR team, Amelia, made this argument, stating that for organisations that already have substantial employee benefits in place, the business case for accreditation will inevitably not be as strong as the moral case:

From a business perspective, universities, if they tend to be big employers in big cities, already have very good terms and conditions in comparison to other city employers. So, the business case. . .there are lots of moral and social issues, but the business factors might not have as much impact in organisations that are already good employers.

Amelia, 2018

Another member of their team, Rory, agreed, stating that “even without the Living Wage, people still want to work here,” but that ultimately, “actually having the take-home pay is the thing that enables people to buy in things for their family, to actually change their lives, and their experience of living.” This is another consistent theme that emerges across the interviews conducted for this project: that those employers who have adopted the Living Wage were organisations that already had a certain level of experience and interest in the employment

conditions of their workers, and a willingness to consider ways to improve them (as discussed in greater detail in chapter 2).

At CSE3, the primary motivations surrounding the business case focused upon the uniqueness of being the first accredited Living Wage Employer in the construction industry in the North East of England, and the impact that adopting the Living Wage could have on recruitment and retention rates in particular. The Director of the firm, Jim, explained that when the board was considering the Living Wage, “there seemed to be a big lack of take-up in the North East and it was fairly stark at the time, so we wanted to be one of the standard bearers for the North East.” The Managing Director, Danny, expressed similar motivations, arguing that being the first construction company in the region to accredit gave them a “distinct USP,” and that it was “certainly something to be proud of.” The Finance Director, Paul, also expounded on the direct correlation between the reputational boost that accreditation had given them, and the subsequent impact on worker recruitment:

Once they [potential workers] realised what was going on, automatically you had a lot of candidates that gravitated towards us because of us, so automatically you got that cream of the people straight away . . . And then word got around, "I want to work for them," so it does work, and we're living testimony of that, we've witnessed that.

Paul, 2018

This was of particular importance to the firm because of their commonplace policy of hiring third-party employment agency builders on an ad hoc basis to work on particular construction projects and support their core workers, and that given that agency workers in the local labour market had the choice between opting to work with different potential construction firms, attracting them to CSE3 specifically was crucial:

We went to the agencies and said "look, this is the criteria." And typically for agency work you're expecting at the bottom end, especially unskilled work, you're expecting to be paid as a temporary worker minimum wage . . . Now we're saying "well the minimum wage might be £7.50, doesn't matter, we're paying above it." So actually, what happens is we get people who want to work, and they want to work for us, so they'll work that bit harder.

(ibid.)

These reflect some of the recruitment benefits that can be enjoyed by a Living Wage Employer upon accreditation, as discussed throughout this thesis in more detail. The wider importance to the firm of improving their workforce retention rates was a recurring theme among interviews with CSE3 staff, a particularly important issue within a sector such as construction. The impact that the Living Wage could have on retention rates was commonly expressed by CSE3 research participants as a “common sense” factor as to why to adopt it:

So, when people come to work for us, if we start from zero, it costs us about three grand to start someone from zero: the tools, the training, all of those things cost money. So, the longer we can keep people, the more productive we can make them, the less we have to pay on training, the less we have to pay on recruitment. So, to us it's just common sense to pay it.

Danny, 2018

At other employers spoken to for this project, similar sentiments on the clear and credible business case benefits for accreditation were also raised regularly. At one recruitment tech firm in London, payment of the Living Wage was directly linked by the Head of Partnerships and Marketing, Alice, to a productive and reliable workforce:

For us, it's important that we're working with companies that share our passion and enthusiasm for hiring workers who feel like they are being treated fairly. And with that you end up getting a workforce of people who are dedicated to the job, and not just dedicated but motivated, really motivated, and feel like "oh OK, this is a great place to work.”

Alice, 2018

For the cleaning company in the City of London whose founding principles were established around the principle of the Living Wage, the reward for structuring their business around such a moral bedrock were the clear benefits for both the organisation and their employees themselves, One financial backer of the London-based cleaning firm, Mark, stated that “we're not short of potential cleaners, and paying the Living Wage means that we're never short of applicants for jobs. . .recruitment is just much easier.” This reflects the sentiments expressed by both CSE2 and

CSE3 of the organisational benefits that can be enjoyed through payment of the Living Wage in attracting high quality candidates from the local labour market towards working at their firm.

The above insights on the moral and business cases for voluntary adoption of the Living Wage by an employer also speak to a wider theme that recurs throughout the findings of this project, too: namely that one of the foremost explanations as to why the Living Wage is adopted by organisations is by key individuals within the upper management team of an employer being successfully informed of both what the Living Wage is, and the moral arguments behind the campaign for it. This is typically accomplished in a number of different ways, whether it be through internal discussion within an organisation, public pressure via a Citizens UK (and/or another group) campaign, behind-doors meetings with Living Wage Foundation officers, awareness delivered from a separate organisation known to the employer, or a myriad of other avenues. The public nature of the accreditation process, and the reputational benefits that an employer can gain from becoming a part of it, is also a central part of successfully persuading employers that there can be distinct business benefits to adopting the Living Wage, as well as such a move being ethically sound.

Given these findings, it seems erroneous to state that there is widespread opposition to adopting the Living Wage by employers in the UK, so much as there is a distinct lack of awareness of both what exactly it is (particularly in comparison to the National Living Wage), what the moral and business case arguments for the measure's adoption are, and an inability of some firms to think more widely about the policy's likely organisational impacts beyond the immediate financial impact of implementing it. A significant aspect of the Living Wage campaign's success, then, can be attributed to the effective utilisation of ethical and business case arguments successfully reaching those within organisations with the power and influence to adopt the pay measure: and while the most persuasive arguments will vary from employer to employer, as these findings demonstrate, it is having the arguments given a fair hearing in and of themselves that can ultimately lead to a firm adopting the Living Wage as company policy.

5.8. Concluding remarks

This chapter has focused on an in-depth exploration of the motivations of employers for adopting the Living Wage, through both the three primary case study organisations that this project is concerned with, as well as the experiences of a variety of other employers in a wider number of

industries. It has examined among other aspects the various means by which an employer comes to be aware of the Living Wage, the development of the processes by which decisions are made within an organisation to begin paying Living Wage rates, and the moral and business case reasoning that is often behind these decisions. It places an emphasis on understanding how and why employers come to be aware of the Living Wage as a potential tool that they can utilise, and in how they then decide to become a formally accredited Living Wage Employer.

Case study one illustrates the extensive process through which the Living Wage can come to be adopted by a large employer, and of the separate steps that need to be taken in drawing awareness of key decision-makers within an organisation of both the existence of the measure and the impact it can have on low-paid workers, as well as the potential risks and benefits of implementation. At CSE1, the decision to adopt the Living Wage was less the decision of one leader, but instead involved the deliberation of a considerable number of key individuals within the organisation, and the work of the entire senior management team in preparing the ground for such a decision to be made. Through the influence of the Chief Operating Officer, it demonstrates the need for internal advocacy from individuals in a position of power and/or influence who are supportive of the measure to help ensure that the decision to formally adopt the Living Wage is ultimately taken by an employer.

It also demonstrates the means by which employers who do become fully accredited with the Living Wage Foundation can be persuaded to do so via the application of public campaigning pressure, applied both externally and internally, and of the specific worker-centred, community-organising style applied by Citizens UK in putting pressure on certain significant employers to become accredited.

Case study two provides an example of how the Living Wage comes to be adopted within smaller organisations with less diffuse decision-making processes, and of the internal and external consequences of becoming an accredited Living Wage Employer within a sector that has not yet embraced it in large numbers. It also demonstrates the role that can be played by the primary leaders of organisations themselves in taking the decision to adopt the Living Wage after becoming aware of the movement behind it, and the ethical and strategic business case reasoning that can help to influence such a decision.

Case study three provides a salient example of the impact that dynamic individuals can have in convincing an employer to adopt the Living Wage, and of their critical role in communicating the benefits of accreditation to other members of their organisation. It also reinforces the findings of case study one of the nature of decision-making processes within smaller firms in how organisational change occurs, and of the wider benefits that a firm can enjoy by going beyond Living Wage Foundation accreditation guidelines and investing even further in their workforce.

Insights from other employers analysed within this chapter help to reinforce the findings derived from the three primary case study employers focused upon, notably around the broad consensus on the moral and business case foundations of adopting the Living Wage, and the resultant organisational impacts on areas such as reputation, recruitment, and retention rates. They also underpin the wider themes of this chapter, specifically that those employers who typically decide to implement the Living Wage contain dynamic individuals within their workforce who are passionate about it, and can help drive it forward; that such organisations tend to have a pre-established grounding of corporate social responsibility strategies, and ideals of what an employer's role in society is; and that the means and motivations by which the Living Wage comes to be adopted by individual firms varies widely depending on its own decision-making processes, the influence (or not) of external actors such as Citizens UK and the Living Wage Foundation, and the geographical and sectoral characteristics which determine what kind of organisation it is.

Taken in conjunction with each other, alongside the contextual overview provided by findings from other accredited employers, the three case studies demonstrate the different processes by which the Living Wage comes to be adopted by an organisation, of the nature of those employers that are willing to consider its implementation, and of the ramifications of these decisions for organisations themselves.

The next two chapters will examine the wider impacts of an organisation's decision to adopt the Living Wage, ranging from the consequences for a firm's subcontracted employment relationships, to the implications for workers themselves of being paid at Living Wage rates of pay.

Chapter 6: The wider impact of Living Wage accreditation: consequences for subcontracted employment relationships and supply chains

6.1. Introduction

This chapter places a key focus on exploring the second research question of this thesis, namely “*what are the organisational impacts of implementation of the Living Wage?*” While some of the primary organisational impacts of formal adoption of the Living Wage were discussed in the previous chapter, including the impact on public reputation and the increased appeal of an organisation within their local labour market that can result from accreditation, this chapter focuses on a series of particularly important aspects of the consequences of the measure’s implementation by individual employers: namely the ramifications for both subcontracted workers and subcontracted employment agencies of an organisation that they are contracted with becoming an accredited Living Wage Employer.

Through an exploration of the experiences of this study’s case study employers in terms of their subcontracted employment relationships, supply chain networks, and their independent decisions with regards to their own internal procurement policies, this chapter argues that through the strategic leveraging of supply chain management choices, such as making decisions on which firm to purchase equipment from based on their own corporate social responsibility policies, or only awarding subcontracted agreements to other fully-accredited Living Wage Employers, ethically-minded organisations can utilise their own Living Wage accreditation status to positively enhance the status of workers within other workplaces.

Perhaps the central contribution of this chapter, however, is the significance of the insights that individual employers and the Living Wage Foundation themselves can have upon the internal wage policies and working practices of subcontracted firms, through the explicit accreditation stipulation of subcontracted workers also being entitled to the Living Wage. This can be considered an inversion of one of the original purposes and motivations for why employers typically decide to outsource workers, namely to help save money through lower wages: following the acceptance of the Living Wage Foundation’s accreditation guidelines, the existence of subcontracting in such organisations can in fact help to constitute the basis for the spreading of better employment practices and higher pay beyond an accredited Living Wage

Employer's own workforce, and across their own supply chain. As seen in the example of one case study employer within this chapter, the two-tier wage structure this creates within subcontracted firms can also lead to them becoming accredited Living Wage Employers themselves. This is a significant evolution of the civil regulatory reach of the Living Wage movement, demonstrating their influence beyond those immediate employers which are part of the Foundation's accreditation network.

These findings make a unique contribution to existing literature on the UK Living Wage through their focus on exploring and understanding the wider role that adoption of the measure has beyond an organisation's immediate workplace and along its own supply chain, an aspect of the Living Wage movement that remains underreported and explored within the current literature base.

This chapter first explores the impact that procurement policies and supply chain management choices made by individual employers can have on encouraging and facilitating wider adoption of the Living Wage, as well as the impact on subcontracted employers of the Living Wage Foundation's accreditation guidelines, which demand payment of the Living Wage to outsourced workers as well as an accrediting employer's core workforce as a core condition of accreditation. It then explores individual findings from each primary case study employer explored within this study to highlight a separate insight into the impact that the Living Wage has had on an organisation's supply chain and procurement policies. These insights contribute to a wider empirical and theoretical understanding of the role of supply chains and subcontracted employment relationships in regulating higher wages and working conditions across the UK employment landscape today.

These explorations of the individual experiences of case study employers help to make the wider point that beyond the immediate impact of Living Wage accreditation on specific workplaces there is a wider employment relations impact independent of each individual organisation, primarily through the impact and influence of becoming accredited on a firm's supply chain and subcontracted employment relationships and procedures. It contextualises these experiences in the wider context of the means by which higher wages, better working conditions, and other factors which impact upon both workers and employers are regulated and fought for by various actors and stakeholders within the complex nature of subcontracted employment relationships,

alongside an exploration of the impact of supply chain and procurement decisions by individual employers.

It is primarily concerned with providing an in-depth understanding of the impacts on subcontracted workers and those that employ them within the context of changes brought about by an organisation becoming an accredited Living Wage Employer, as well as illustrating how the procurement policies of ethically-motivated employers can potentially be utilised to persuade other organisations to also adopt the Living Wage.

This chapter contributes to the literature surrounding the increasingly fragmented employment relations landscape which has emerged within Britain in recent years, particularly since the evolution of the gig economy and the various non-standard forms of employment that have become established both within and alongside it. It places a particular emphasis on the arguments put forward by Wills on the challenges of subcontracted employment and its challenges for regulating decent wages and working standards among and across supply chain networks and subcontracted employment relationships, and her contention that there is “a need for subcontracted workers to put pressure on the “real employer” at the top of any contracting chain” for this to happen in a credible manner (2008, p. 441). The literature surrounding the exploration of inter-organisational relationships (Grimshaw, Willmott and Rubery, 2004) is also utilised to frame these insights within existing discussions in the field, with a particular focus on the near-constant variations of trust and power within such relationships, and the potential for such relationships to be utilised to regulate higher wages and decent working conditions for individual workers.

6.2. Living Wage Foundation accreditation and subcontracted worker requirements for employers

In order to have a full understanding of the nature of the relationship between subcontracted employment structures and the UK Living Wage, it is essential to be aware of the stipulations and guidelines that all employers who wish to be accredited as Living Wage Employers must adhere to within this area. The most important of these is exactly which workers the Foundation expects each employer to be paying Living Wage rates to, defined as a question by the body in their own accreditation guidelines as “how far down the supply chain should it go?”

The Living Wage applies to all your directly employed staff, as well as regularly contracted staff. The exact definition is those contracted staff who work 2 or more hours a week, for 8 or more consecutive weeks a year.

(Living Wage Foundation, 2020)

This speaks to the changing employment landscape of Britain and the wider world in recent decades, in which the prevalence of subcontracted employment relationships and the permanent practice of contracted and subcontracted workers operating alongside each other in the same workforce have become increasingly common. This is a phenomenon that has developed as national and global labour markets have become increasingly diversified and moved away from the traditional employment relationship, with employers progressively hiring more subcontracted workers on an ongoing basis and increasingly utilising more insecure forms of employment such as fixed-term and zero-hour contracts, developments that in the past two decades have also developed in tandem with the evolution of the gig economy (Forde and Slater, 2005; Finn, 2011; ILO, 2016), discussed in greater detail in chapter 2 of this thesis.

Wills (2009) has argued that the growing number of workers operating on a subcontracted basis “reflect the fact that increasing numbers of workers are no longer directly employed by the organization where and/or for whom they work” (Wills, 2009, p. 443). In setting out this stipulation within their accreditation guidelines the Foundation have identified and taken note of these changes to the employment landscape, and through their enforcement seek to prevent organisations from being recognised as Living Wage Employers whilst only paying their non-subcontracted workers such rates of pay.

This is perhaps one of the least discussed, but most important, decisions that the Living Wage movement has taken in seeking to raise wages and standards within the UK labour market: by fundamentally disrupting subcontracted employment relationships through the insertion of non-negotiable Living Wage clauses, they have created a ripple effect of higher wages which filter from the decision of one employer to become accredited, down to subcontracted workers who work for separate organisations, who may then become Living Wage Employers themselves. By putting the onus on the “main employer” at the top of subcontracted employment relationships to establish particular standards that cannot be breached as a stipulation of their accreditation status, they reinforce the arguments of Wills (2009) that the most effective way of raising standards

down a supply chain is “to put pressure on the “real employer” at the top of any contracting chain” (ibid, p. 441).

In the case of the relationship between the Living Wage Foundation and accredited employers, that pressure has already been applied, by individual organisations voluntarily being part of an accreditation model which sets certain guidelines on supply chain policies. This process, then, demonstrates that the UK Living Wage represents a successful intervention in raising wages throughout an increasingly fragmented employment landscape, and have developed an accreditation model which sidesteps some of the new challenges in securing higher wages for low-paid workers within such a landscape.

Challenges remain, however, in extending this infiltration of higher wages into other areas of working practices. As is discussed more extensively in the second part of this chapter, and in the following chapter focused on the lived experiences of workers receiving the Living Wage themselves, high hourly rates of pay are of less use to workers when they are on insecure conditions of employment which only provides them with a certain number of hours of guaranteed work per week (for example zero-hours contracts). Farina, Green, and McVicar (2019) have argued that the prevalence and nature of zero-hours contracts have been “historically underestimated” within the UK labour market, and that this remains the case today. With the launch in 2020 of the Living Wage Foundation’s “Living Hours” scheme, applying the pre-existing Living Wage accreditation model to new employers who commit to guaranteeing their workers a significant number of hours of work per week, it remains to be seen whether the same penetration of the subcontracted employment landscape can be achieved again, in a new area of working practices.

The Living Wage Foundation has a dedicated operation in advising all still-accrediting employers on how to navigate the complexities of modifying pre-existing subcontracted employment contract structures to ensure that they are in line with accreditation guidelines. For those organisations with particularly complex structures, the Foundation provides its services “to identify opportunities for uplift to the real Living Wage, such as through break clauses or renegotiation mid-cycle, so that most contracts are uplifted to the real Living Wage within three years” (Living Wage Foundation, 2020).

One area in which the Foundation does not enforce Living Wage rates of payment, however, are for workers in organisations which only provide products to an accredited employer, with the difference here being that these firms are in a purchasing relationship with each other, rather than an employment one. The guidelines themselves state that:

The Living Wage does not apply to contractors that supply your organisation with products e.g., stationary suppliers. We recommend that you communicate your Living Wage commitment to everyone you do business with, and encourage them to consider implementing the Living Wage.

(Living Wage Foundation, 2020)

While the Foundation does not enforce Living Wage accreditation for all of an employer's supply chain providers, then, this does not mean that an ethically-minded Living Wage Employer cannot promote and encourage said suppliers' own conversion to accreditation status via their own initiative, something discussed in greater detail in following sections of this chapter through the example of an independent initiative launched by the director of CSE2 to do just this.

The distinction here, between a supply chain relationship and a subcontracted employment one, demonstrates the importance of specifying the exact type of inter-organisational relationship when discussing the balance of power and conflicting strategic interests of separate stakeholders within an analysis such as this. It is also important to be specific about the fact that the changes discussed here are being brought about by the strategic leveraging of financial pressure, rather than by trust, with this pressure being directed from the main employer for the subcontracted firm to accede to these demands, if they wish to continue to win contracts with an accrediting Living Wage Employer.

A key focus of the literature surrounding inter-organisational relationships places a key focus on the importance of trust between parties in these relationships. Popp et al (2014), for example, argue that trust "is the lubricant that makes cooperation possible between these actors, and higher levels of trust are believed to lead to increasing network effectiveness" (2014, p. 93).

Nevertheless, others have emphasised the importance of different forms of pressure within such relationships, too, including that of power, and the nature of power imbalances among network members. Marchington et al (2004), for example, have argued that:

Where the contracting organization enjoys a strong market position, for example, it is more likely that subcontractors have a strongly dependent relationship and are therefore liable to assume a disproportionate share of the risk. Power is exercised by lead network firms as they orchestrate market competition between members and non-members of the network to put pressure on suppliers, subcontractors, or weaker partners.

(Marchington et al, 2004, p. 55)

Large and influential Living Wage Employers, then, can exercise a strong level of power over subcontractors that they are asking to adhere to paying their workers the Living Wage, through their market position giving them the upper hand in such discussions. It therefore stands to reason that those organisations which can have the largest impact by becoming Living Wage Employers are those with the most sophisticated and extensive number of subcontracted employment relationships, as applying pressure on these relationships can lead to the inadvertent raising of wages for workers outside of their own firms.

Similarly, Provan and Lemaire (2012) have defined the concept of advocacy within inter-organisational relationships as the ability “to exert more pressure due to greater political clout and community reach resulting from greater numbers and diversity of network members” (2012, p. 93). Within this context, this can be said to pertain to the Living Wage campaign itself: that as it becomes more influential, its potential for advocating for the voluntary adoption of higher wages by individual employers becomes more and more powerful: particularly when, for example, the majority of firms within a particular sector are accrediting, and one firm does not wish to be left behind and risk reputational damage by refusing to become formally accredited.

The linking of the example of the Living Wage Foundation’s subcontracted employment guidelines with the inter-organisational relationships literature also reflects the stakeholder theory perspective which forms the theoretical framework of this thesis. Such relationships are the very definition of understanding a concept or particular issue through the lens of the wider set of actors, with their own competing interests and standpoints, that comprise the ecosystem which a particular actor operates within. And within this context, through an understanding of other relevant stakeholders, it is possible to examine and explore the processes through which higher wages are disseminated throughout an employer’s own supply chain networks.

6.3. The Living Wage, subcontracted employment, and procurement policy: experiences of case study employers

In interviews with the relevant personnel at CSE1 for this project concerning the role of procurement and subcontracting processes in implementing the Living Wage, the theme of a short-term mindset versus a long-term one when making administrative decisions was again raised, as it was in a host of other areas discussed elsewhere in this thesis. The Head of Procurement for the university, Daniel, made a number of strong statements which challenged the idea that high costs and ethically-minded decisions would always inevitably be at odds with each other, arguing that:

Sustainability, and social responsibility, and responsible procurement, they can, if it is done well and done right and with good value for money, they can go hand-in-hand, but many people have a very short-termist view of it.

Daniel, 2018

Those interviewed were also keen to emphasise that ethical procurement choices were being made by the organisation beyond the Living Wage itself too, noting for instance that they were the first UK university currently seeking a separate accreditation award for eliminating sustainable palm oil in all catering activities. Another member of the procurement team, Donna, also pointed out that such choices did not only come from one group of administrators within the organisation, either, but rather from a variety of different levels within the wider university:

There are wider efforts and context to our ethical decisions too, beyond talking about the Living Wage: social value, or responsible procurement or whatever you want to call it in this context, there are a lot of other initiatives going on. Some of them are driven by the students, but some of them come from staff with a social compass, who want to do the right thing, and there's a momentum because of that within the university.

Donna, 2018

These insights further highlight one of the central themes of the previous chapter of this thesis, namely of the necessity of having ethically-minded individual “champions” in place in key decision-making areas of an organisation in order to help influence and facilitate ethical choices

to ultimately be made. Daniel emphasised this theme in particular in stressing the need for such individuals to be present on the University Executive Board itself, noting that “it helps when you’ve got the University Executive pushing things, because it means things just get done. . . It needs those champions.”

The complexities of encouraging subcontracted employment firms to accredit as Living Wage Employers, but not having the legal freedom to require them to do so, was also discussed at length. Another member of the procurement team, Gavin, recalled the period of the university’s initial adoption of the Living Wage, when there were worries that existing subcontractors would refuse to uprate their own workers to be paid at Living Wage rates of pay for their work despite the non-negotiable nature of this request, and the procurement department’s surprise when there was little opposition to the move:

There were lots of questions about it. . . but they didn't refuse to do it, because they knew that they could pass the additional costs on, and it was incorporated into their bid, essentially.

Gavin, 2018

However, the struggles with one particular subcontractor were also discussed:

We do tender [one particular area] every three or four years, but there is a company that consistently wins it. And they're the ones who took quite a lot of "arm behind their back" struggles to get the Living Wage cascaded through to their employees. They didn't refuse to do it, but they were being a bit awkward: putting up some barriers, didn't understand it, didn't want to understand it. But we got there since, and they now pay the Living Wage.

(ibid.)

Such struggles again speak to the concepts established within the existing inter-organisational network literature, and the shifting nature of both trust and power in negotiations such as this (Grimshaw et al, 2004). The head of the procurement team, Daniel, also spoke to the difficulties of such dialogues, particularly on those occasions when the university required confirmation that the subcontracted staff of their own subcontracted firms were being paid Living Wage rates of pay:

It's in our construction contracts, so we need that confirmation from them that every member of staff that they employ, whether they're subcontractors or actually employees of the main contractor themselves, they are paid the Living Wage themselves. . . because main contractors these days, they don't employ anyone and they sub everything out, so they're a facilitator really, that's how they get their structural subcontractors. . .so that's the way that that industry's gone. But we needed to be sure that it cascaded down, along with things like paying their second or third tier suppliers within 30 days.

Daniel, 2018

The complexity of these arrangements, and the accompanying complexity of ensuring that a main contractor has oversight over the inner workings of such arrangements, further underlines the fragmented evolution of the UK employment landscape that has occurred in recent years. One of the ways that such issues can be avoided by employers is to bring their outsourced workers back “in-house” following the decision to become Living Wage Employers, something that the first university to be accredited, Queen Mary, University of London, decided to do upon their accreditation in 2006, in addition to raising wages and improving cleaners’ terms and conditions to a higher degree than was initially expected by campaigners. Wills’ (2009) research into the experiences of Queen Mary in making this decision noted that there was widespread agreement among the senior management team that the decision to reverse the outsourcing of workers was facilitated by the Living Wage campaign focused on the university, which in turn provided the employer with a new-found recognition that the previous subcontracted model was not working for them. In the words of the university’s Chief Administrative Officer:

In this instance, the experimentation with services being provided by the private sector was a failure in my opinion. It was a failure in terms of the quality of service that was being delivered.

(Wills, 2009, p. 5)

Following the decision to move cleaners back in-house, 83 per cent of university staff surveyed stated that they had seen an improvement in cleaning services (ibid, p. 11), further underlining the improvements in quality of work that can be achieved through making ethical decisions that benefit the lowest-paid employees of an organisation. The example of Queen Mary also

demonstrates another way in which the Living Wage movement can disrupt subcontracted employment relationships and supply chain management decisions through their actions, which can both lead to improvements in wages and working conditions, and demonstrate to more employers that outsourcing core services does not automatically result in cost savings and an easier-to-manage workforce.

Or, in other words: by including the stipulation that all outsourced workers must be paid the Living Wage, the UK Living Wage movement have successfully inverted one of the original impetuses and rationale for outsourcing, by preventing outsourced workers being employed on lower rates of pay than an organisation's core workforce. The ability of a civil society actor to influence the independent internal working structures of employers in this way demonstrates the significant impact that the Living Wage movement has had on the employment relations landscape of the UK, as well as exemplifying the dramatic evolution of the level of influence that civil society organisations can now exert across the employment landscape.

It is also of note that through this creation of an incentive for accredited Living Wage Employers to bring workers back in-house (through the structural elimination of one of the key incentives for retaining such systems of work), the work and strategic interests of civil society actors like the Living Wage Foundation are operating in tandem with those of other actors across the industrial relations landscape. These include both traditional trade unions, and the new crop of grassroots-led trade unions such as the Independent Workers Union of Great Britain and United Voices of the World, who place a high priority on a transition for their typically-outsourced members to be moved back in-house (discussed in greater detail in chapter 2).

This shared interest among trade unions and civil society actors for the same goals shows the stakeholder theory perspective which underpins the theoretical framework of this thesis in practice, with unions utilising one form of pressure (industrial action and public demonstrations), and civil society actors another (business-friendly persuasion, appealing to both moral standpoints and strategic business benefits of voluntary CSR strategies, the specific rules of accreditation conditions) as another. These dual approaches are strikingly similar to the internal "carrot and stick" strategy of the Living Wage campaign itself, discussed more in chapter 8, but at a wider level which also encompasses an extensive variety of different actors and stakeholders with their own strategic self-interests, all working towards the same goals in their own ways.

Returning to the case study employers, in the case of CSE1, the decision of the university to absorb the initial cost of uprating all subcontracted workers to the Living Wage at the time of accreditation with the Foundation to ease the financial pressure of the decision on subcontracted firms in an employment relationship with the university (at a cost of £400,000) was also referenced in a number of interviews, with one member of the procurement team, Donna, crediting this decision with helping to reassure existing subcontracted employment agencies at the time of the ramifications of the university becoming a Living Wage Employer:

We tried to reassure them and push them towards the Living Wage Foundation website which has some more information, and just tried to give them some reassurance that we were going to pay it, so if you're part of that you can, not pass the cost on but you will get the money from us and you can then attract people on a higher wage level, and hopefully attract a higher calibre of the candidate.

Donna, 2018

The head of procurement, Daniel, agreed with this viewpoint, arguing that:

I remember [name], who was then the Director of Finance, he wasn't sure about the whole thing because it was going to cost us x amount of money. And the Exec Board just said "so? We'll just have to take that hit, because it's something that we actually want to do." And I'm glad that we did it when we did, because obviously since then others have fallen in suit, some sooner and some later, but they are falling in suit. And it's a good story to tell for the university, a very positive one.

Daniel, 2018

These experiences speak to the complexities of the ways in which tensions between organisations who exist within a pre-established subcontracted employment relationship can be affected by the decision of one of the parties to independently enact an ethically-minded policy which will inevitably impact on their own workforce, particularly within an employment landscape in which subcontracted employment tiers are becoming ever more complex and multi-faceted. They also, again, speak to the need for internal advocates of the Living Wage in positions of influence within organisations considering accreditation to help quell doubts and

push on with implementation, as a core characteristic of those employers most likely to become accredited Living Wage Employers (discussed more in chapter 5).

The limits of how far down the supply chain management process it is possible to go before enforcing ethical standards was also raised within interviews. One member of the procurement team, Katie, raised the issue of the Modern Slavery Act, and the need for UK-based employers to be aware of and safeguard against any instances of modern slavery within their supply chain:

So, for suppliers in our high-risk areas for modern slavery, so we're talking about IT, catering, some office supplies, some lab consumables, and a few other areas, we have issued questionnaires to our suppliers, where we've asked them to complete those questions, give us as much assurance as they can about their own supply chains. So, they have to do their own due diligence as well, down their own supply chains.

Katie, 2018

These insights show the perhaps inevitable limitations of one organisation to be able to strictly enforce their own independent ethical guidelines and standards on their entire supply chain, given the vastness of just how expansive these supply chains are. This again comes back to the distinction between subcontracted employment relationships and purchasing relationships, however, as discussed elsewhere within this chapter, and in the inter-organisational network literature more widely.

These insights into the limits of what can be achieved by an employer's own independent attempts at civil regulation via ethically regulating their supply chains also demonstrates the need for powerful civil society actors that do have the resources and capacity to do so, where legal oversight does not exist. For example, Daniel referenced the regulatory organisation Electronics Watch, which helps to monitor and enforce employment standards and uncover instances of modern slavery in the electronics industry, as one way of tackling the issue of ethical oversight within wider supply chain relationships:

A number of universities and other public sector bodies and private sector bodies have joined [Electronics Watch] as members to help fund their activities, and then they do audits at various major manufacturers that are assembling parts, and look at the subcontractors of these factories. Because whilst Dell might say "oh yeah, everything's

fine," you have to think: do you trust them? So obviously there needs to be some follow up. But it can be costly, and pursuing it in isolation as an organisation by yourself you'll get nowhere, so you have to do it as a collaborative thing.

Daniel, 2018

These insights explore the dynamics between the trust (or lack of) between stakeholders within a supply chain network, and demonstrate a space in which civil regulatory actors can step forward and provide a wider level of oversight, through their increased resources and capacity (discussed more within the literature review of this thesis).

Daniel also discussed the case of the internal unrest that emerged within one subcontracted firm of the university which resulted from their adoption of the Living Wage, with the cleaners working on university premises being paid higher wages than those within non-university workplaces:

I think that was part of the problem with [one particular subcontractor], whom I mentioned before. Because their lower-paid workers, when they came to work on university sites were being paid the Living Wage, but some of the workers who were working on other sites would be getting paid the minimum wage, so within the business, then, there were people doing essentially the same thing but being paid the same wage, and that was their big issues that they had to get over internally. Because obviously their workers will all just want to come work for us, because they'll get paid more!

Daniel, 2018

Daniel explained how this turned into an internal workplace issue for the subcontractor firm:

So, they had that internal issue. But what they did, and it did take a while (two months, wasn't days), but eventually they had to enhance their rates for everyone, or at least that's what they said. And we knew that the people working on our site were being paid the Living Wage, but we couldn't ask for evidence about their other sites, so whether they did or not I'm not sure, but I'd hope they would! So that's quite an interesting case.

(ibid.)

This example demonstrates the ways in which one employer's decision to adopt the Living Wage can have ripple effects and ramifications for low-paid workers along its own supply chain and subcontracted employment relationships within other workforces, and promote higher wages and stronger working conditions by proxy rather than because of any ethically-minded strategies on behalf of the affected firms themselves.

This by-proxy establishment of a two-tier wage structure within subcontracted firms, and the pressure for them to become Living Wage Employers themselves to quell internal worker strife from the creation of such a structure (or at the very least uprate their pay scales in general), could be considered one of the more unanticipated impacts of Living Wage Foundation guidelines requiring that Living Wage rates must be paid to subcontracted workers of an accredited employer. Based on these findings, it also suggests that a number of subcontractor firms in an employment relationship with an accredited employer may have risen workers' pay rates themselves across the board, to compensate for the internal workforce strife created when those workers assigned to a particular contract are being paid more than their colleagues. These are issues not yet touched upon by other scholars in this field, and require extensive further exploration and empirical investigation.

The greater dissemination of Living Wage coverage throughout an employer's own supply chain may also not be considered a specific benefit for the main accrediting employer of becoming accredited (when adhering to self-interested strategic reasoning for accreditation, rather than moral ones), but nonetheless increases payment of higher wages to a wider number of workers within their own supply chains through the rules that the Foundation themselves have set down.

During interviews regarding the decision-making process for Living Wage accreditation at CSE1, one particular comment from the Chief Operating Officer, Helen, revealed a particularly interesting insight into the lack of oversight that employers often have over the wage rates of the subcontracted workers that work alongside their own core workforce. In this instance, Helen stated that she had decided in a personal capacity to support full accreditation for the university prior to the decision itself being made, after being made aware of the low wages that university workers had been receiving up until then:

And then we asked Finance the question about the cleaners, and I was quite amazed actually. Because I was in HR at the time, and we had no sightline into the contracting

worlds: we didn't know that the cleaners were being paid minimum wage, and that supervisors were getting a 50p lift on that. And it was at that point that I had my "road to Damascus" moment that we can't be doing this, and we wouldn't have been doing it if I'd known.

Helen, 2018

This speaks to the impact that the continued reliance on subcontracting central components of an employer's workforce (in this case cleaners) can have on oversight and quality control within an organisation, and that maintaining adequate levels of pay and monitoring wider working conditions can be negatively impacted by a lack of oversight on the part of management staff as much as such decisions are deliberate ones. Wise (2013) argues that the wider use of subcontracting over the past decade, what Tsing (2009) refers to as "supply chain capitalism," has created a "moral detachment" among employers which allows them to abdicate their own responsibility for ensuring that workers are being paid and treated well for their labour.

Wise contends that this situation ensures that "employer–employee relationships become harder to define, as the relationship is disrupted between the worker and the entity for which the productive activity is ultimately performed" (2013, p.443), which can lead to accidental as much as deliberate omissions in maintaining decent work standards, and a situation such as the one in CSE1 where a HR department has no clear sightline into the wage rates that their institutions' cleaning staff are being paid.

In terms of the impact that supply chain decisions by main employers can have on improving employment standards in general, there was widespread agreement among those at CSE1 that it was an important tool in facilitating positive change within organisations. Daniel argued that:

Whether it be the Living Wage, whether it be modern slavery or ethical employment, if organisations insist on minimum standards with the suppliers that they engage with, that's only going to be a good thing in driving up standards, if the bar is being raised.

(ibid.)

Daniel also referenced the fact that by the very act of enacting ethical initiatives, an organisation can pave the way for more such efforts by setting a precedent:

It does change the mindset of staff and people within the university more widely. I mentioned people who have a good social compass, but it leads on to other initiatives too. Because the Living Wage is just one of them. . . and if that becomes the organisation's way of working, we are going to be more responsible in lots of different areas. And that has a positive impact, economically and socially and environmentally across the organisation, and of course within the area and sector that that organisation sits.

Daniel, 2018

The suggestion here is that through the implementation of a specific and ethically-minded voluntary action by an employer, other corporate social responsibility initiatives may become easier to gain support and ultimate approval for within the firm. The above insights also shed light on the interplay between various organisations that can lead to the greater application of higher ethical standards for an employer's workforce as well as the workforces of those firms that they have an existing subcontracted employment relationship with, and the various forms in which inter-organisational pressure can be applied to enable such decisions to be made and standards to be raised.

6.4. The utilisation of procurement policy as an ethical tool

As befits the much smaller nature of case study employer two (CSE2) in contrast to CSE1, the implications of adoption of the Living Wage and becoming accredited with the Living Wage Foundation in the arena of supply chain management and procurement policies were much less significant. As a small holiday park in a remote location, the only subcontracted workers affected by accreditation guidelines were the occasional instances in which the director was hiring, in his words, "skilled contractors for things I couldn't do . . . mainly electricians who spend a lot of time on the park, and they were all paying everybody well above the real Living Wage already."

The relative simplicity of adhering to this complex aspect of the Living Wage Foundation accreditation guidelines for small businesses, rather than having to rearrange the practicalities of large subcontracting agreements already in operation (as some large organisations must do when accrediting), may be one reason why smaller firms are so well represented in the list of official Living Wage Employers (Johnson, Koukiadaki, and Grimshaw, 2019). However, while issues of subcontracted employment structures were less of a factor for this particular organisation,

important insights can be derived through the experiences of CSE2 into the ways in which supply chain management choices by ethically-minded employers can increase adoption of the Living Wage by other firms, specifically through the independent initiatives established and put into practice by the Director of CSE2.

Perhaps the most noteworthy of these is the means by which the Director of the park, Sam, has taken on a pro-active role in increasing full-scale Living Wage Employer accreditations across CSE2's supply chain relationships, by tying in the decisions that the park makes on which firms to purchase goods and services from with the ways in which they treat their own workforce, and whether they will make the decision to formally accredit as Living Wage Employers.

The most significant instance of this strategy came in November 2019, when the park awarded a £600,000 contract to a specific UK holiday caravan manufacturer after they first agreed to become the UK's first accredited holiday home manufacturer with the Living Wage movement. In explaining this self-directed policy, Sam argued that "my thinking is simple: existing Living Wage employers should leverage their supply chain, to promote and encourage other suppliers to join the Living Wage family." Sam also discussed his own personal independent efforts to increase uptake of accreditation numbers:

At [our park] we have Living Wage promotional material in our meeting room, so it is easy for my team to drop the Living Wage into all supplier meetings. Additionally, since becoming accredited in 2015 I have told all 4 of my caravan suppliers that I will buy all my caravans from the first manufacturer to accredit, in their year of accreditation – that's around 25/30 caravans at around £600,000 . . . [one particular company] rose to the challenge and accredited in 2019, hence awarding them the contract.

Sam, 2018

These efforts also extended beyond this particular purchase, however, with the park also utilising regional and national trade exhibitions to continue persuading other caravan suppliers to become Living Wage Employers, and leveraging their own purchasing power to compel them to do so. The Director discussed his continued attempts to secure these accreditations, stating that if successful then "over half the caravan manufacturing market in the UK will be Living Wage," after which "I will be encouraging them to apply pressure on their dealership networks."

These actions demonstrate the ways in which adoption of the Living Wage, and subsequently securing higher wages for an increasingly larger number of workers, can be secured not only through the actions of the UK Living Wage movement itself, but also through the independent initiatives and promotion of Living Wage adoption by employers who have already become accredited, particularly through leveraging pressure among their supply chain relationships and via their purchasing power to coerce others into making ethically-minded decisions.

Such efforts reflect how it is not only organisations such as Citizens UK and the Living Wage Foundation who have a monopoly on putting external pressure on employers to raise their worker's wages, and wider working conditions: ethically-minded individuals within individual organisations can also play a key role in uprating standards on a voluntary basis, outside of their own workplaces. This demonstrates the wider system of stakeholders which make up the wider Living Wage movement, and the way that civil regulatory efforts can be advanced by individuals as well as by civil society actors such as the Living Wage Foundation. Such a multi-actor, civil regulatory framework, when successful, can play a substantial role in overseeing those areas of the UK labour market and employment landscape not properly policed or enforced by existing legal regulatory systems, discussed at greater length in the literature review of this thesis.

Beyond the commercial aspect of wishing to secure a specific contract by acquiescing to a particular demand of an organisation (in this case to become an accredited Living Wage Employer), the peer-to-peer element of one business advising another to become involved in the network may also have more persuasive power than the Foundation itself campaigning for firms to become involved, as another business would be more aware of the implications of such a decision, and have less of a vested interest in persuading them to do so. The success of such efforts will vary depending on a whole host of contextual issues such as the financial/organisational viability of a firm making such a decision, of course, but their role may also provide a viewpoint to organisations considering accreditation that they cannot receive from the Foundation itself: namely the perspective of a fellow business who have also made such a decision, and can share their own experiences and its organisational impact on their own operations.

These findings also demonstrate the means by which supply chain decisions and a firm's purchasing power can be utilised for social value, rather than solely for competitive advantage:

what could be considered a form of ethical consumerism on an organisational level. The Director of CSE2 also sought to increase uptake via giving away free holidays to those individuals seeking to compel other employers to pay the Living Wage, explaining:

In 2015 I actually ran a competition and I said I'm prepared to give away up to ten free holidays to any guest who takes their business to living wage accreditation. And I said and if you are the owner of the business, if you can demonstrate to me that you were the reason it happened or catalyst then you would be, then you can have a free holiday. And I wasn't doing it to say you have to be a business owner, recognising most people aren't, but actually recognising that you can have catalysts within businesses who bring an idea forward.

Sam, 2018

This idea introduces a further element to the role that individuals can have in convincing other firms to become Living Wage Employers, through the means of appealing to an individual's own self-interest (in this case a free holiday) for the sake of the adoption of wider organisational ethical standards. It is also of note that the winning recipients of this scheme do not have to be the owners of an accrediting business, with the Director of CSE2 themselves noting that the individuals who create the conditions for employers to adopt the Living Wage are not necessarily always the key decision-makers within their own workplaces, in line with the findings of the previous chapter of this thesis.

6.5. The impact of Living Wage implementation on independent employment agencies

With regards to the experiences of CSE3, one particular salient point of the relationship between adoption of the Living Wage and the supply chain management process at CSE3 was the considerable impact that accreditation had on those workers not directly employed by the firm itself. Because of the construction sector's commonplace policy of hiring third-party employment agency builders on an ad hoc basis to work on particular construction projects, the organisation's decision to pay the Living Wage created a bottom-up link across its employment supply chain, with agency workers with a choice of whom to work for being attracted to work on CSE3 contracts because of their accreditation status. The firm's Finance Director, Paul, explained that:

The other bit that's helped us really well is that we use a degree of temporary workers, agency workers, to fill in for our core workers . . . and we went to the agencies and said "look, this is the criteria." And typically for agency work you're expecting at the bottom end, especially unskilled work, you're expecting to be paid as a temporary worker minimum wage . . . Now we're saying "well the minimum wage might be £7.50, doesn't matter." So actually, what happens is we get people who want to work, and they want to work for us, so they'll work that bit harder.

Paul, 2018

The firm's managing director, Danny, reinforced these points, arguing that adoption of the Living Wage had been an enormous benefit in increasing the quality of candidates attracted to working with the firm, particularly those considering a specific contract of work with the firm via a number of third-party recruitment agencies that have a subcontracted employment relationship with CSE3:

It does have a lot of positive impact; I've noticed it throughout. Especially with third parties, we use a lot of agency labour, to reinforce our labour that we have from direct employees, just to make sure that they have the right support . . . and because we work with the agencies that supply that labour, we pay the Living Wage now, so they now have to as well.

Danny, 2018

In a similar fashion to the experiences of CSE1, Danny also noted the ripple effects of their decision to become a Living Wage Employer in their local labour market, from the reaction of the recruitment agencies to those of individual workers themselves:

And they were sort of shocked, and once the workers realised what was going on, automatically you had a lot of candidates that gravitated towards us because of it, so automatically you got that cream of the people straight away. And then word got around, "I want to work for them," and all that carry on, so it does work, and we're living testimony of that, we've witnessed that.

(*ibid.*)

The firm's director, Jim, also discussed the reaction that recruitment agencies which they had a supply chain employment relationship with had to the news that the firm had become a Living Wage Employer, and that Living Wage rates of pay would now be guaranteed to all workers working as subcontracted builders on their own organisation's contracts:

So, like the agencies, and other people coming in the business that we say "oh this is what we pay," to them as opposed to industry norm, and you do get good feedback from people. Sometimes surprising feedback, but positive nonetheless. And on occasion, when it first happened people were genuinely shocked. And also saying "what's the catch?" And we said "there's no catch, this is just what we do, we're a Living Wage Employer."

Jim, 2018

These experiences speak to wider issues surrounding the management of agency labour and the evolution of a "two-tier workforce" in the contemporary labour market (James, 2011; Jahn and Pozzoli, 2014). And as these practices become increasingly common, as discussed at greater length at chapter 2 of this thesis, a construction firm that levels the playing field on wages between contracted and subcontracted workers will inevitably seem more attractive to those deciding which roles to apply for, as in the case of CSE3.

As discussed in more detail above, the Living Wage Foundation have also noted these changes to the employment landscape, by ensuring that their accreditation guidelines explicitly state that employers must also pay subcontracted workers (and anybody working on a workplace premises for more than three hours a day) at a Living Wage rate of pay too, to prevent employers from being recognised as Living Wage Employers while only paying their non-subcontracted workers these rates. For CSE3, their own reliance on agency workers as a fact of their industry, and their ability to guarantee to such workers through public accreditation with the Foundation that they will be paid the Living Wage in the same way that their own core workforce is, has provided them with an important tool to draw a higher quality of workers towards them as a choice employer to work for within the region.

These findings suggest that in order to fully ascertain the impact of the Living Wage on the UK labour market and employment landscape thus far, it is critical to look beyond simply the number of currently-accredited employers within the Foundation's LWE network, and examine more

closely the interplay between accreditation and an organisation's supply chain and procurement operations, along with the subcontracted employment relationship structures that reside within them. They also raise further questions on whether the number of workers currently receiving Living Wage rates of pay in the UK may in fact be higher than is currently calculated, too, particularly within sectors such as construction where the subcontracting of third-party agency workers is especially widespread and longstanding.

Furthermore, these insights also suggest that a focus on leveraging the supply chain and procurement relationships of ethically-minded employers may be an important tool for the Living Wage Foundation in future as a means of seeking to broaden payment of Living Wage rates to a higher proportion of low-paid workers in Britain.

6.6. Adoption of the Living Wage Within a Changing Employment Landscape

Among the wide array of non-case study accredited Living Wage Employers explored as part of this thesis, the experiences of one in particular can help provide some insights into how the Living Wage can be more widely embedded within the UK labour market through the voluntary setting of ethical standards by individual organisations within the gig economy. These standards can help to provide a challenge to the narrative that the gig economy itself can only ever result in more insecure and precarious forms of employment emerging at a time when the employment relations landscape is changing beyond recognition, and the erosion of the traditional employment relationship continues to develop. This discussion is of relevance within this chapter because the firm under discussion operates in the same manner as a typical subcontracted employment agency within the traditional employment landscape does, demonstrating how the Living Wage can be extended throughout the gig economy through the ethically-led actions of gig economy employment agencies.

The organisation in question, a Swedish-founded human resources tech start-up firm based within London and the South East of England, operates in the role of a recruitment agency for workers in the gig economy, assisting individual freelancers in securing short-term or one-off "gigs" in lieu of a more conventional employment contract. While the firm itself consists of only a small workforce, all paid considerably more than the Living Wage, it has become accredited with the Foundation in its role as a third-party agency guarantor that all work that it connects individuals with will be set at a Living Wage rate of pay as a minimum, either at the London-set

rate or the national amount depending on location (following the civil regulatory framework set down by the Living Wage Foundation in determining where these geographical boundaries lie).

The Head of Partnerships and Marketing, Alice, justified the firm's focus on the pay rates that they demand for those individuals that utilise their services on both ethical and business case grounds, as explored more widely in the previous chapter of this thesis:

So, for us, it's important that we're working with companies that share our passion and enthusiasm for hiring workers who feel like they are being treated fairly. And with that comes, you end up getting a workforce of people who are dedicated to the job, and not just dedicated but motivated, really motivated, and feel like "oh OK, this is great."

Alice, 2018

Alice also discussed the firm's commitment to challenging the notion that the emergence of the gig economy automatically equals the lowering of working standards and rates of pay:

You hear gig economy and you go "oh no," but it doesn't have to be like that, the gig economy is just people choosing to work differently. And it is inevitable, technology has changed and has continued to change the way that we work, and you can't fight it: human relationships and human interactions will always be irreplaceable to a certain extent, but why should it have to suffer as a result of people choosing this new flexible way of working, and picking jobs that give them a little more self-fulfilment?

Alice, 2018

Developing a business model of enforcing a higher form of worker standards than is legally required, because it is both fair and makes sense on a strategic level, is a model that if extended beyond this firm to a variety of other organisations within the gig economy could help to build a stable foundation as a means to better protect workers in this evolving sector. Despite its relatively recent emergence the gig economy has already developed a reputation for extending the risks for individual workers of not being paid high enough rates of pay to afford a decent standard of living (ILO, 2016, 2019), risks exacerbated by the sector's lack of established trade unions (IWGB, 2020), and it could be the case that a model focused primarily on ensuring that all "gigs" are paid at Living Wage rates of pay by the third-party actors that facilitate these gigs

is a potential avenue for challenging the low pay reputation of this burgeoning sector, in the absence of traditional employment relationships within the gig economy.

The firm's HR Director, Ellie, also explained the thinking behind their own firm's Living Wage accreditation as:

We treat [individuals that utilise them to find employment] like we would like to be treated ourselves: you know, they're not our employees but they're on our pay roll, so we make sure that they have decent wages and working conditions.

Ellie, 2018

This is a theme that has raised itself repeatedly within this chapter, and the wider project itself: that for certain ethically-minded firms who are seeking to raise the wages and working standards of individuals within their workplace, the responsibility for an organisation's workforce does not begin and end with contracted core workers, but also includes subcontracted workers and others within their working environments. For a firm like this, that almost entirely relies on a subcontracted workforce, operating in a sector that is still being defined and is rapidly evolving (Ellie described the firm's operations as "a mixture of a hybrid of a traditional recruitment agency and an app," with the platform operating in the form of a regulatory intermediary), this is central to their notion of corporate social responsibility and business ethics as an organisation, rather than just one strand of a wider strategy. Their example also demonstrates another form of civil regulation that can be put into practice by individual employers through their own independent initiative, and help to facilitate the raising of wider employment standards within a sector.

6.7. Concluding remarks

This chapter has explored the wider organisational impacts that implementation of the UK Living Wage through formal accreditation with the Living Wage Foundation can have on the subcontracted employment relationships of accrediting employers, and the ripple effects that it can have for the internal workplace dynamics of subcontractor firms themselves. It also examines the wider impacts that ethically-minded supply chain management and procurement choices made by individual employers can have on encouraging and facilitating wider adoption of the Living Wage, primarily through an examination of the findings derived from interviews

for this study with the project's case study employers. It utilises the specific experiences of this their experiences and insights to demonstrate the processes and regulatory conditions by which this can happen, as well as making the wider point that beyond the immediate impact of Living Wage accreditation on specific workplaces there is a wider employment relations impact independent of each individual organisation, primarily though the impact and influence of becoming accredited on the wider relationships that an employer has with subcontractor firms and other actors within their supply chain networks.

It also explores one model by which the raising of wages and employment standards could be facilitated within the gig economy in particular, personified in this project by the experiences of an individual HR/recruitment firm currently operating within the gig economy. With one of the ambitions of the firm being to demonstrate to other organisations in the still-developing industry that it is possible to pay decent wages to workers within the gig economy, it suggests that an endemic of low pay and in-work poverty does not necessarily have to be one of the defining features of the gig economy moving forward, if such a model can continue to be developed and effectively enforced within the sector's regulatory framework, even if this is only on a voluntarily basis similar to the Living Wage Foundation's civil regulatory efforts across the wider UK labour market.

This chapter argues that the requirement by the Foundation for all subcontracted workers to be paid the Living Wage, embedded into the accreditation guidelines that all accredited Living Wage Employers must follow to retain official status within their network, is an underreported and incredibly important aspect of the impact of their work across the UK employment landscape, and one that deserves significantly more attention from scholars. It has provided the Living Wage movement with an avenue into disrupting subcontracted employment relationships and other aspects of supply chain and procurement policies in the name of promoting and enforcing higher standards of pay for all workers, rather than only the core workers of the individual employers who decide to become accredited, and inverted one of the original purpose of many outsourcing arrangements among employers (cutting wage costs).

This is a particularly important development in an era when the fragmentation of the UK employment landscape is becoming ever more complex, and the oversight of what third party workers are paid and the conditions that they work in are becoming ever more shrouded in

secrecy and layers of administration. The Living Wage Foundation guidelines help to provide a means of simplifying this landscape, as well as ensuring that individual employers seeking accreditation cannot simply enjoy the reputational benefits of becoming a Living Wage Employer while also enjoying the “moral detachment” of absolving themselves of responsibility for the pay rates of the subcontracted workers that work alongside their core workforce. These findings also demonstrate that they are not the only stakeholder within this environment that can exert pressure on other actors in some way, and that exploring the push and pull of power, trust, and advocacy within such inter-organisational relationships is critical in understanding the wider impact of the UK Living Wage campaign to date.

More widely, this chapter argues that through the proper leveraging of supply chain management and procurement choices, such as making decisions on which firm to purchase equipment from based on their own corporate social responsibility policies, or only awarding subcontracted agreements to other Living Wage Employers, ethically-minded organisations can utilise their own Living Wage accreditation status to positively enhance the status of workers within other workplaces. It also highlights the economic and legal complexities of turning such ambitions into reality, particularly for public sector actors with significantly less scope to favour Living Wage Employers in tendering processes.

Finally, these findings help to provide a multi-dimensional analysis of the complex nature of the wider impact of the Living Wage on the UK labour market, primarily (but not only) through their infiltration into the internal workplace relations of non-affiliated employers via the Foundation’s accreditation model guidelines on the payment of the Living Wage to subcontracted workers too. This demonstrates the considerable impact that a well-crafted and well-facilitated civil regulatory framework can have on the working practices of individual employers, and that, through the wider stakeholder ecosystem which makes up the Living Wage movement, a wide variety of other actors also have agency in applying pressure to others to voluntarily (or not) raise wages for their lowest paid workers. This analysis helps to contribute to the existing literature base on the wider impact of the UK Living Wage beyond accrediting employers themselves, as well on the wider literature surrounding the potential scope and methods of effective civil regulation both within Britain and abroad.

Each of the case studies and organisations discussed above also suggest that if the wider ripple effects of Living Wage accreditation are more fully understood, a focus on leveraging the supply chain and procurement relationships of ethically-minded employers will likely be an important tool for the Living Wage Foundation in future, as a lever to help broaden payment of Living Wage rates to a higher proportion of low-paid workers in the UK.

Chapter 7: Employer adoption of the Living Wage: impacts on workers

7.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the third research question of this thesis, namely “*what impact does adoption of the Living Wage have on low-paid workers?*” This question is also inextricably intertwined with the previously-discussed organisational impacts of the Living Wage, as it is this project’s contention that no comprehensive understanding of what these impacts entail can be reached without also understanding the perspectives and lived experiences of those workers who directly benefit from the decision of employers to pay the Living Wage.

Through an examination of the impact on workers when they receive the Living Wage, this chapter argues that any such impact-based analysis cannot be comprehensively concluded without also considering the wider parameters of what constitutes decent working standards for employees at the lower end of the income scale, and the interplay of these practices with the raising of hourly rates of pay. The importance to workers of guaranteed hours of work from an employer alongside a transition to adopting the Living Wage is also discussed, for example, as are the concerns that employees have about working standards and policies that their employer propagates even after formal accreditation with the Living Wage Foundation.

This chapter explores and analyses the insights of the workers employed at each of the case study employers primarily focused on within this thesis, ranging from their experiences of being paid the Living Wage, their wider thoughts on the voluntary nature of their employer’s decision to pay it, and a series of other interrelated issues within the workplace. Within these discussions a number of broad themes emerged that speak to both the personal and financial impact of the Living Wage on the lives of workers, but also on their wider thoughts surrounding decent standards of work, most particularly around the complexities surrounding the interplay of wages and hours of guaranteed work, a theme that carries through to discussions within the next chapter of this thesis.

The findings discussed in this chapter make a significant contribution to the existing literature base on the impact of living wage rises for low-paid workers, and to the wider literature on the UK Living Wage itself. The chapter contributes three in-depth case study explorations of the perspectives of workers in receiving the Living Wage, and how they experience being paid these

rates of pay with respect to their relationship with their job, their employer, and the wider impact on their personal lives. As discussed in chapter 3 in greater detail, the perspective of Living Wage workers themselves have been largely absent from the existing literature on the Living Wage (Zeng and Honig, 2017), a gap that this chapter (and wider thesis) helps to fill.

7.2. The Living Wage as a liveable wage

Questioned on whether Living Wage rates of pay were set at the correct rate to enable them to afford a decent standard of living, there was near-unanimous sentiment among workers that being paid the Living Wage was only either barely enough to live on, or simply not high enough at all. Laura, a café server employed at CSE1, drew attention to the lack of a safety net that being paid at Living Wage rates resulted in:

The wage itself, it's enough to live on, but it's not enough to save money on. So, you can get by, but I struggle. If I stop working for a month, I sink, and it's hard to build some protection from the financial pressure . . . but there aren't many jobs around here that can provide you with that, at this level.

Laura, 2018

An office assistant at CSE3, Margot, argued that getting by on the Living Wage was “difficult, but not impossible,” but that the flexibility to work more hours when required was necessary to help ease these difficulties.

Those who did believe that the Living Wage was enough to live on were all young, unattached workers with no dependents or caring responsibilities. All, however, had a keen sense of the fact that while they themselves could afford to live relatively securely while being paid such rates of pay, this was most likely not the case for those supporting wider households beyond themselves.

Anne, a cleaner at CSE1, argued that it was only through sharing the financial burden with others that the Living Wage was enough to live on:

It's nice that it went up, but it would have been nice if it had gone up to £10 an hour. Because then you look at it [the raise] and all you see is, rent went up, council tax went up . . . so unless you're living with loads of people and you're all splitting the difference in terms of living costs, that's the only real way you're going to have any money.

Anne, 2018

Lily, a receptionist at CSE2, raised the example of her own partner and his struggles in getting by on minimum wage, arguing that “on that he still struggles, even with just one child.” Workers at CSE2 in particular raised the high proportion of their wages that went on the cost of rent as a key concern, with one groundswoman, Jenny, stating that a number of her friends had left the local region because of this, and that “most people my age, they’ve had to move either abroad or up country because it’s cheaper.”

The issue of a lack of public transport links within the local area, and the essential nature of owning a car that added to the costs of living, were also raised as key considerations by workers as factors which necessitated being paid a higher rate of pay in order to stay financially secure. Phil, a maintenance worker at CSE2, argued that the Living Wage made just enough of a difference, and that “the Living Wage. . . just adds on, it pays for petrol, and stuff like that.”

A small number of workers did believe that the Living Wage was enough to live on, however. Enrique, a cleaner at CSE1, argued that:

Here, if my wife kicked me out tomorrow (which is quite possible), I could survive: and I'm talking about survival, you know I could rent a house in [an area outside of the city], not just a room but a house, and so yes, it's a low salary, but it's not so low that I cannot live, not like in Spain, not in my city in Spain. So that's why I feel that the Real Living Wage is at least fair.

Enrique, 2018

Emma, a cleaner at CSE3, argued that the variance between legal minimum wage rates of pay and the UK Living Wage made an important difference in her personal life, and “that little extra bit does add up really, it might not seem a lot, but it does mount up, it makes a difference.”

Stanley, an administrative office assistant also at CSE3, argued that it had enabled him to both afford a good cost of living, and save for the future:

It's definitely helped. Because I was living with my partner, we were renting a flat, but obviously I moved home, saved for a mortgage, so with that I'm able to get a nice car upfront, go out and enjoy myself, but at the same time I'm also able to save for a

mortgage at the same time. So that extra bit of money that I wouldn't have without the Living Wage, that gap, that's going straight into savings, so it's a big safety net kind of thing, and just really there when I need it.

Stanley, 2018

There was a striking disparity in the opinions among workers on whether or not the Living Wage was enough to afford a decent standard of living on based on which employer the individual in question was working for. This speaks to the regional disparities of cost-of-living rates, which can be much higher in more affluent areas (such as where CSE2 is based), and much lower in others (where CSE1 and CSE3 are based).

This also raises questions about the reliability of having a national calculation for the Living Wage while only having a separate one for London, and the campaign's acknowledgement of the higher cost of living in the capital, but not in other areas. In a recent regional analysis of cost-of-living disparities across the UK, the cost of living in Brighton, for example, is estimated to be below only London, with Oxford coming in third (Rice, 2020). Given these figures, it is striking that both Oxford and Brighton also have their own independent living wage campaigns, unaffiliated with the Citizens UK Living Wage campaign, with their local living wages set at a higher rate than the campaign's national rates (as discussed in greater detail in chapter 2 of this thesis).

It is also the case, however, and as others within the field have pointed out, that “a sliver-bullet methodology does not exist, nor will ever exist” with regards to a full-proof calculation of the Living Wage that can satisfy all circumstances, whether on a regional or any other type of basis (Anker, 2011, p. 52; Johnson, Koukiadaki and Grimshaw, 2019). Nevertheless, it remains to be seen whether the UK Living Wage campaign will place a focus on the regional setting of Living Wage rates of pay in the future, although their move towards a more place-based approach through the “Living Wage Places” project, discussed more in the next chapter of this thesis, could be considered a tentative step in this direction.

7.3. The psychological contract: wider standards of decent work

Another key theme that arose throughout interviews with workers concerned the “psychological contract” (Rousseau, 1989) between workers and their employers, and the vital nature of having

and feeling respected by the organisations whom they worked for through other decent standards of employment present in the workplace. Laura, a café server employed at CSE1, raised the example of the voluntary nature of the Living Wage as a key point of feeling respected by her employer paying her such rates of pay, and that the bestowing of this level of respect worked both ways, arguing that “I think it works the opposite way round, really. Because they’re respecting you by doing it off of their own backs, so you have to respect them too.” Emma, a cleaner at CSE3, stated that:

It does boost your morale, it's all those little things, the little bonuses and things like that. It does make you think "oh, I am worth it," that they don't take us for granted, I'm not just a number.”

Emma, 2018

Beyond the Living Wage itself, Rebecca, a cleaner at CSE1, also raised the importance of having a friendly manager, and that “you feel different when you go to work” because of both of these factors. Another cleaner at CSE1, Anne, argued similarly, stating that “they treat you with respect, and they appreciate the work that you do. And that's one of the things that I noticed straight away; everyone treats you really nicely.”

Stanley, an administrative office assistant at CSE3, raised in-work progression as a key factor in feeling satisfied with the relationship between himself and his employer when asked if he felt respected through the voluntary nature of his employer’s decision to pay the Living Wage, arguing that:

There's always a chance to work up the levels, too. If you say you want to work to become manager, they're happy to help you towards that, so all that is great here. And we have reviews every year about what we're doing and if we want to get on, and they'll help you, so they're very good for that.

Stanley, 2018

The importance of in-work progression as a key aspect of what constitutes decent working standards is discussed in greater detail in chapter 2 of this thesis.

Hanna, an administrative assistant at CSE1, went so far as to argue that the “human support” that she received from her manager was just as important as an adequate wage that it was possible to live on:

And it's not just the money, which is not an amazing amount of money we are getting in, but the support we have . . . and that's important to me because I've only been working here two years, but maybe in five years' time I'll still be here and have a problem, and that's why I really want to continue working here. So that's nice, that human support, that is equally as important as the salary.

Hanna, 2018

Jenny, a groundswoman at CSE2, argued that she felt a greater willingness to work harder in her job because she was being paid the Living Wage, and that “if we do work longer hours, it’s often because we’re not obligated to but we just feel like we want to because we care more about it. Because we want to take pride in it, too, so you want to get the work done.”

There were concerns about working practices in other areas too, however. Valerie, a cleaner at CSE1, raised the issue of her responsibilities rising without her pay doing the same:

I just feel that I have more responsibilities more than it was say years ago, and when I get to say point 10, my wages stay the same. And I’m being honest now, I've got more and more responsibilities and they do look at it, and see then if there's reasons to be paid more, but that hasn't been looked into for a long time.

Valerie, 2018

Tom, another participant alongside Valerie in the worker’s focus group discussing this issue, presented an opposing argument to her perspective, however, arguing that “I don't think that she can see that all that is development, as well. So, they give you more responsibilities, you do that so you will be ready for the next job, and can slot into it.” Enrique, a cleaner at CSE1, expressed clearly that the voluntary actions of the university in raising working standards had given him a clear sense of pride in working for them, likening his support for his employer to that of a fan cheering on a football team:

So, I'm proud as I say, I like wearing the colours of [this university], but it can change, and that can break your heart. So then, you really miss what you lost. So, like in Spain, I was very proud of my company, but then everything changed. And that's why I don't want to feel that sensation again, I'm really proud of working here, and hopefully it won't change, we will continue to keep on fighting.

Enrique, 2018

These insights speak to the importance of respect by an employer for the workers that they employ, both in financial terms and in creating a supportive and friendly workplace through other decent work standards, and the reciprocal rises in terms of employee engagement and staff loyalty that these efforts can inspire. They also correspond with Zeng and Honig's 2017 study of the effects of living wages on the attitudes and behaviour of workers transferred to such rates of pay, as referred to in the literature review of this thesis. The authors utilise social exchange theory as a theoretical framework for their analysis, rooted in the theory's core arguments that when workers perceive a reasonable level of respect, appreciation and treatment from their employers, they will typically feel obligated to repay such actions with a higher quality of engagement within their roles, and feel a greater level of loyalty to their company (Blau, 1964; Meyer et al, 1989; Wagar, 1998; Jiang et al, 2012).

Following their study, Zeng and Honig found that adoption of the Living Wage had a marked positive effect on the attitudes of workers to both their employers and their own individual jobs, and that "providing living wages that allow employees to lead a decent standard of living is part of a positive exchange between employers and employees benefiting both groups" (Zeng and Honig, 2017, p. 29). These findings correlate with the insights expressed by workers within this thesis, providing new insights and evidence for the contention that "employers should not consider living wage implementation as a practice that works against businesses," and instead view it as a measure that can help support an organisation's long-term development through investing in their workforce to help increase employee engagement and loyalty, lower turnover rates, and attract more candidates to roles within the firm. These findings bring to mind discussions in chapter 5 of this thesis of one of the core characteristics of likely Living Wage Employers being those who have the foresight to see the long-term benefits of voluntarily taking the decision to raise salaries for the lowest-paid workers, beyond the immediate financial cost to

the organisation's overall wage bill. They are also reflected in the positive organisational impacts experienced by each of this study's case study employers following their implementation of the Living Wage in the fields of recruitment and retention, discussed in more depth in chapters 5 and 6.

7.4. The importance of the guarantee of regular and sufficient hours of work

One of the most consistent themes that arose in interviews with workers for this study was the central importance of being guaranteed enough hours in a typical week and/or month to work, beyond the voluntary uprating of hourly rates of pay themselves. For example, Archie, a catering worker at CSE1, argued that the opportunity to work more hours was one of the only reasons he was able to stay financially afloat, even while receiving Living Wage rates of pay:

I'm the lowest grade in the university, but I do the closing down and I'm a key-holder, so they like to give me the hours, so I can actually get a lot of hours. But for a lot of people, they might not be able to get as many hours from their employer, and then they might struggle . . . so I always put myself forward for those hours, and if I didn't then I would struggle.

Archie, 2018

Holly, a facilities worker at CSE2, linked the need to work more hours to be able to afford to live as an untenable situation which could be rectified by raising the Living Wage to a higher level:

And even if you're happy to work more hours. . .it's a horrible situation, because increasing your hours also means having less leisure time, which also decreases your quality of life, so it's finding that right balance. So, wages need to be enough that a traditional working week can afford you enough to live on.

Holly, 2018

Gill, a grounds assistant at CSE2, linked the potential for higher pay for other jobs within his local area as a false economy, because of the lack of guaranteed hours available to work:

It's reasonable hours here for the pay as well, because some things you look at and you go "oh they get £10," but they only get 20 hours a week, so you have to work 2 jobs so

you still get a good amount of money. Whereas here is a bit better because at least here it's job security, I know that I will get at least this much or thereabouts each week.

Sam, 2018

Phil, a maintenance worker at CSE2, discussed the example of his previous employer raising pay rates for lower-paid workers but then cutting their hours of work to compensate for it, "so you were worse off for the week than you would be had you just kept the same lower wage." These experiences are reminiscent of those discussed in the work of Wills (2009, 2013) of the sometimes-minimal (or even detrimental) impacts for workers of voluntary implementation of the Living Wage by employers, when the higher wage bill of adopting such pay policies are offset through a reduction in the hours which workers are entitled to work, discussed in greater detail in chapter 5 of this thesis.

A recurring concern raised by worker interviews for those employed at CSE1 revolved around the 35 hour a week cap that many of them faced in available working hours, with extra hours only available sporadically rather than on a regular basis. Rebecca, a cleaner within the university accommodations team, argued that the weekly pay rate when working at 35 hours a week, even when being paid the Living Wage, was difficult to survive on:

It's difficult, but not impossible. But 35 hours isn't enough, you need 40, more than 40, and sometimes when I can get extra hours it's much easier. Because at the start of the month when you pay rent, by the end it's rough.

Rebecca, 2018

This was also the dominant topic of discussion at a focus group with a group of five separate workers from different teams and departments at CSE1. Andrew, a catering assistant, argued that "I have to do as many hours as I can, just to keep above water," repeating again the concerns expressed above that the Living Wage was not set at a sufficiently high rate to give workers a stronger sense of financial security. Similarly, Tom, a security porter, argued that this was especially important for those workers with dependents:

The Living Wage is the baseline, but here we work 32/33 hours a week, so maybe that's a bit more of a problem. Not for me, because I don't have children or family that need more support, but some people need to work a few more hours.

Tom, 2018

Sally, a grounds worker who had been working at CSE1 for the past seven years, raised the problem of the hours that were available for work being steadily decreased during her time being employed by the university:

It depends on how many hours you work. Because when I started working here it was a 40-hour week, then it went down to 37, and now the maximum is 35. And 40 hours would mean an extra £200 a month, which is a massive difference.

Sally, 2018

Andrew detailed his typical working hours as “24 and a half one week, 30 and a half the next, so back and forth, back and forth, so around 27. Sod all really!” Similarly, Sally remarked that “and if he could put in another 13 hours on there, that would make such a difference to his life.”

Andrew also raised a wider issue about the complexities of only being guaranteed a certain number of hours of work per week, and the impact that this can have on social security support assistance from the state:

Before I was working here, I was working in a pub, and doing 35 hours a week. And the pub had a refurb, new management and different things, and when I came back, I was only able to do one shift, that's all management would give me. So, I needed housing benefit at the time. And when I was on the housing benefit, the managers would then say "can you work this shift or that one," and I actually had to refuse, because it made more sense for me to have housing benefit and work one shift than it was to work more of them. Which I didn't want, I wanted to work more.

Andrew, 2018

This speaks to the interplay between the welfare state and the labour market in determining the financial stability of workers, and the somewhat bizarre situations such as Andrew's that result in low-paid workers declining more hours of work even when offered them because of the

consequences for social security support assistance that they are also entitled to. Jenny, a groundswoman at CSE2, raised the example of an anonymous colleague of hers who was in a similar situation, stating that:

She's been asked to do overtime but she can't because she's got to take notes in, her bank statements, it puts her rent up, it just messes everything up. . . and it's hard, because if the money goes up a bit, she'll get more benefits taken off her, so there's no benefit really.

Jenny, 2018

These cases illustrate that even when there are sufficient hours of work available for some individuals, then, there are still wider issues at play that may be beyond an employer's control in rectifying, through singular policies such as raising hourly rates of pay or guaranteeing workers a minimum level of (sufficient) hours per week. These issues are discussed in greater detail in chapter 2 of this thesis.

The problem of an insufficient number of hours being available in any given week was also a central discussion point in a separate focus group conducted with CES1 workers. This group discussed in particular a clear divide between workers and their employer with regards to the continued growth of "half-contract" jobs, where workers were employed on a lower number of guaranteed hours per week. Sarah, an office assistant, explained that:

One of the other downsides I see to this is that they'd rather employ two people than one. So, they employ two people on half-contracts, because if one of them is sick, at least they've got back up. And I get it from a management point of view, but for the individual. . .like our receptionist, she's on a job share, so she does half a week, but then she also comes up to [a different department] to clean. So, if she could have that job full-time, she'd be happier.

Sarah, 2018

Anne, a cleaner, explained the reasoning behind CSE1 instituting a wider policy of half-contract job shares:

The reason was that we had cleaners on 35-hour contracts cleaning, and if they were on holiday or sick, who was cleaning? Because people on long-term sick affects everyone

else, and that's where the job shares came into it.

Anne, 2018

These insights speak to the inherent vulnerabilities which workers are exposed to within the UK labour market, as the continued growth of new forms of employment which do not guarantee workers enough hours (paid at a high enough rate) to afford a decent standard of living continue to establish themselves as a permanent fixture of the employment landscape, without effective regulatory oversight of such practices. The perspective of CSE1 as an employer in this instance, instigating such forms of work as a response to the long-term sickness rates of full-time employees, illustrates the divide between workers and the organisations in terms of the competing priorities and self-interests of each group. It also exemplifies the fact that even among accredited Living Wage Employers, complexities remain in the ethics of their working practices beyond voluntarily raising hourly rates of pay in and of themselves.

7.5. The Living Wage as recruitment and retention tool

There was a wide variety among workers with regards to those who were attracted to applying for a role with their current employer because of the organisation's payment of the Living Wage, with some only becoming aware of it at the interview stage for a role. Additionally, other workers had been with their employers before they had adopted the measure, too, while others had sought out Living Wage roles purposefully.

Laura, a café worker at CSE1, stated that she had done so "because I made minimum wage before, which obviously as you know isn't enough to live off. So, I chose to move to a different company to get the Living Wage, because I need it." Gill, a grounds assistant at CSE2, stated that he had actively left his role at the holiday park once before but returned to working there explicitly because of the Living Wage, which "is definitely better than a lot of other places around here."

Additionally, Andrew, a catering assistant, raised the issue of other good working practices as factoring into their own decision to apply for a role at CSE1, stating that "one of the other things about why I came to work here, was they've got a really good pension scheme." Anne, a cleaner at CSE1, raised the example of the attractiveness of the institution as an employer within the

local labour market, which was actively attracting workers from other organisations through their Living Wage Employer status:

My ex-boss is awful mad at me for leaving that job and coming here. But I'm like the third employee who's left his company and come to work for [CSE2], and that's because he only pays the minimum wage.

Anne, 2018

These experiences demonstrate in practice one of the much-vaunted “business benefits” of the Living Wage promoted by the Living Wage Foundation, namely of an increase in attractiveness as an employer, and a great quality of candidate at the interview stage (Living Wage Foundation, 2020). They also speak to the benefits that the Living Wage can result in on an organisational level discussed more extensively in chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis, in both becoming a choice employer within the local labour market, and the potential to attract (and retain) a higher number of candidates and workers through the voluntary decision to pay higher rates of pay.

There was a greater level of consistency among workers about the role of the Living Wage as a compelling factor in remaining with an employer. Valerie, a cleaner at CSE1, was part of another institution and being paid minimum wage rates of pay before her employer merged with the university, and was consequently moved over to receiving Living Wage rates of pay. She argued that being paid the Living Wage “is part of why I’ve stayed in the job,” raising the flexibility over hours as another reason for doing so, and the subsequent ability to be able to care for her children at the same time.

This raises the complexities behind any discussion of working hours, and non-negotiable guaranteed working hours in particular: that while there will be those workers who will always want more hours in which to work, to better keep in pace with the current cost of living, there will also be those like Valerie who actively prefer fewer hours to help balance non-working needs and caring responsibilities. It also brings to mind one of the wider discussion points of this thesis: namely that there is a need for the continued development of new forms of legal and civil regulation within areas of the employment landscape such as this to help balance the flexibility that such roles allow workers with caring responsibilities (to take one example), and the unethical actions that some employers will take through the greater establishment of insecure

forms of work if effective regulatory standards and enforcement structures (legal or otherwise) are not in place to prevent such models exploiting workers on a permanent basis.

7.6. Raising wider standards: challenges and opportunities for the future labour market

One particularly salient point was raised by Enrique, a cleaner at CSE1, which bears highlighting within these discussions. Enrique was passionate about the need for more employers across Britain to become accredited Living Wage Employers, and for the responsibility of more organisations to protect their workers in better ways:

I want it to be the minimum, or at least the average, the normal, not the maximum standard. And while I feel lucky, I don't want to feel lucky: I want this to be normal. And we the workers, it's up to us to work hard to have that, but it's also up to the bosses, to the managers. This shouldn't be a privilege; it should be normal.

Enrique, 2018

Enrique also argued compellingly that the example of CSE1 could serve to compel and inspire other employers to raise their own standards for workers:

And we can use the example of [this university], because we are that good, with the Living Wage, with very good work conditions, so that can work. Because some companies, a lot of businessmen and people say that "you have to choose between Chinese workers or happy workers, but you can't have both," and no that's a lie: you can still compete on the world stage with happy workers.

(ibid.)

These remarks are reminiscent of the role that ethically-minded employers can play beyond their own adoption of the Living Wage, as stakeholders within a wider system which seeks to raise wages and decent working standards for low-paid workers on a larger scale. They also raise one of the recurring wider themes of interviews for this study, ranging from workers to employers to members of the Living Wage Foundation itself: that the idea of a “low wages equals more profit for an employer” dichotomy is a false choice, and that through financial investment in a workforce, a firm can both commercially succeed and have a more motivated workforce. Enrique summarised these arguments as follows:

And of course, we have problems . . . we can do things better, but not the workers. So yeah, happy workers, the Living Wage, you can still do well on the world stage. So, it's an example to the world: you invest in the people, we come here happy, and we do our job.

(ibid.)

Beyond the optimism expressed by Enrique within these remarks, however, he also raised concerns that the UK would follow the lead of his own country of origin, Spain, in lowering wages and working conditions rather than consistently raising them, and expressed a desire for Britain to replicate the employment models of Scandinavia as an alternative to this trajectory:

I want the UK to be like the Scandinavian countries, I don't want it to be like Spain, and I feel like the UK is coming towards that, to be more like Spain and Italy rather than the Scandinavian countries. . . and it scares me, because sometimes it feels that the UK is turning into Spain, and I don't want it to go that way and for this to be a privilege, I want it to be normal.

(ibid.)

A number of workers at all three case study employers raised concerns about the future direction of the UK labour market and employment landscape, with the imminent exit from the European Union being raised repeatedly as a signal that this would have a negative impact on the wages and wider employment rights of workers. Stanley, an office assistant at CSE3, expressed his fears that “I think they will change the businesses after Brexit, and hurt the workers,” with Tom, a security porter at CSE1, linking in the current economic climate with wider geopolitical events:

I just hope that after Brexit this country can stay the country it is at the moment, and I don't want the Tories to destroy it. And in countries all over the world, with people like Trump, they're fighting to make things harder. And in other countries they don't have a Living Wage, they don't even have benefits.

Tom, 2018

A number of workers also raised the underlying message of the Living Wage movement itself, namely the necessity of a wage that it is possible to live on as a morally, economically, and philosophically-sound “decent day’s wage for a decent day’s work” (Living Wage Foundation,

2020). Archie, a catering worker at CSE1, tied the labour-intensive nature of many low-paying jobs directly to the need for a decent wage for such work:

And the minimum wage is just not enough, it's not. And the catering industry, people think it's just serving people, but it can be a really intensive thing, it's exhausting, and working those jobs on minimum wage it's just. . .that's why I left my last few jobs, because it's just not worth it. And now I work here, I enjoy it a lot more.

Archie, 2018

These sentiments speak to the discussion above concerning the increased employee engagement and loyalty that can come from an employer voluntarily deciding to pay the Living Wage, and that is reported in the existing literature base through the work of Zeng and Honig (2016), and Coulson and Bonner (2015). The fact that Archie felt compelled enough to resign from a multitude of other jobs because of the mismatch between the intensity of the labour he performed and the subsequent wage rates he received for his work also brings to mind one of the primary arguments for the existence of a “business case” for the Living Wage, discussed extensively throughout this thesis: namely that of a reduction in employee turnover rates through paying higher wages, that better reflect the hard work that employees are performing. Archie argued further that during a particularly hard week at work, “those extra few hours in a week can kill you, so being paid well for them makes a big difference.”

Enrique, a cleaner at CSE1, raised the issue of the growing prevalence of labour markets that do not provide high enough wages for many workers to support a household, or their families, both within the UK and across international markets. He argued that:

When I was a little boy growing up in Spain in the 1980s, one man could work and provide for his entire family: now that's impossible, both parents have to work, and sometimes even the eldest child as well, just to survive. And now in the UK it's the same, and we are cutting the working conditions all over the world, and now employers have to do more themselves.

Enrique, 2018

The remark that “employers have to do more themselves” speaks to many of the wider arguments and themes of this thesis: most specifically the increased sense of responsibility for the wellbeing of their workers that a proportion of employers have voluntarily taken on in an increasingly deregulated labour market, as well as the need for civil regulatory frameworks to encourage the wider adoption of higher wages and decent working standards within such an economic landscape.

All of those workers spoken to believed that businesses have a moral responsibility to pay workers an adequate wage on which they can adequately afford to live. Tom, a security porter at CSE1, argued that “without the employer there'd be no employee, but the employee is the one that runs everything, and if we all walked out, there'd be nothing.” Similarly, CSE1 café worker Laura argued that larger employers had even more of a social obligation to pay it, stating that “[CSE2] is the one of the biggest employers in the area, so they've got a big responsibility.”

These sentiments bring to mind one of the key questions across the British employment landscape today, and indeed across much of the western world as in-work poverty rates continue to increase in the labour markets of a host of other countries (Kenworthy and Marx, 2017; Hennessy et al, 2017; Peña-Casas et al, 2019; Plum, Pacheo, and Hick, 2019), namely: is it the role of employers themselves to keep workers out of in-work poverty? Or, as Brennan (2019, p. 15) puts it: “do employers have a moral duty to pay a living wage?”

These questions become ever more complicated as the employment landscape becomes increasingly more fragmented, discussed in chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis with regards to the more recent challenges that have emerged alongside the rise of the gig economy, and the proliferation of increasingly precarious forms of employment more widely (ILO, 2016).

It also brings to mind the wider discussions of chapter 2 of this thesis with regards to the interplay between employers and the social security support system in supporting workers financially to a liveable degree, and whether the duty to prevent in-work poverty is as much the responsibility of the state as it is individual employers themselves. Where responsibility should be divided between the state and non-state actors for the prevention of poverty (including in-work poverty) is at the heart of the literature surrounding the discussion of welfare state regimes, and the differing types that have emerged in different countries over the past two centuries. Esping-Andersen (1990, 2002) argues compellingly that such responsibilities are held by the

“three pillars” of any society with a welfare state, namely the market, families, and the government, and that the three pillars are mutually interdependent:

The family, just like government, may in theory absorb market failures; similarly, the market (or government) may compensate for family failure. Where neither is capable of substituting for ‘failure’ in the two others, this is when we encounter an acute welfare deficit or crisis.

(Esping-Andersen, 2002, p. 11)

Esping-Andersen argues that increasingly all three pillars are failing for a rising number of individuals, and that when we talk of welfare reform and shrinking the size of the state, we should also question whether the other two pillars can sustain these changes in their own way. Within such a framework, and, in the case of the UK, following a decade of social security retrenchment as a result of austerity measures by successive governments (Taylor-Gooby, 2016; Alston, 2019), it would seem apparent that employers do indeed have a greater responsibility to tackle in-work poverty.

However, such an extensive area of debate within the academy also involves a wide-ranging series of separate philosophical, economic, and political perspectives, and thus while the focus of this thesis does not allow scope to examine these in any in-depth manner here, the division of responsibility between separate actors across society in tackling in-work poverty through (in part) paying a living wage is an important component of any study of the voluntary adoption of the UK Living Wage by employers across Britain. It also speaks to the stakeholder theory perspective utilised as a theoretical framework for this study, in which the vast array of other actors and stakeholders which interact with and help inform both the work of the Living Wage movement and the basic *need* for that work (through the existence and exacerbation of in-work poverty within the UK), are always taken into consideration when seeking to arrive at a greater level of understanding of the UK Living Wage on the employment landscape of Britain.

7.9. Concluding remarks

This analysis of the impact of the Living Wage on the lives and perspectives of individual workers has demonstrated that any such discussions cannot be separated from the wider parameters of what constitutes both a decent wage, and a decent employer. While hourly rates of

pay can be raised, these new rates do not in and of themselves protect workers from the income security implications of not receiving enough guaranteed hours of work during a typical week, nor the complexities of losing crucial financial support from social security support schemes, and cannot be considered a panacea in and of itself as a wage-setting mechanism that can effectively tackle in-work poverty rates within the UK. Furthermore, while workers are generally appreciative of the voluntary nature of their employer's decision to pay the Living Wage, it is a whole host of other workplace initiatives and structures that also help workers feel supported and respected at work beyond pay levels: for example, through a friendly manager, the opportunity for in-work progression, or the flexibility of an employer that takes into account an individual's own caring responsibilities outside of their working life.

These insights also echo two of the key wider arguments of this thesis: that the Living Wage is not a complete solution for the wider roots of in-work poverty and the proliferation of precarious working standards in Britain today (discussed in greater detail in chapter 2), and that the decision of the Living Wage Foundation to transition from a solitary focus on hourly rates of pay to a wider decent work agenda prioritising the security of hours for low-paid workers is a significant evolution of its role as a civil society actor seeking to influence the UK labour market and employment landscape. They also demonstrate that becoming an accredited Living Wage Employer does not also simply mean that wider concerns from workers about a lack of decent working practices within accredited organisations immediately disappear, once the Living Wage begins to be paid.

Chapter 8: The evolution of the UK Living Wage campaign

8.1. Introduction

This chapter is focused upon exploring the fourth and final research question of this thesis, namely “*What is the role of the UK Living Wage campaign within a changing employment and industrial relations landscape?*” It is primarily concerned with exploring the role of the Living Wage movement, and more specifically the Living Wage Foundation, as an independent labour market actor within the UK industrial relations arena, and what its existence and the means by which it operates can tell us both about how individual organisations make decisions to voluntarily respond to civil regulatory standards, and how wages and higher employment standards are fought for (and by whom) across the employment and industrial relations landscapes of Britain today. It also examines the complex relationship between the Foundation and its campaigning partner Citizens UK, placing an emphasis on the benefits and challenges inherent to this partnership, and the evolution in the wider movement’s approach to interacting with individual employers over the nineteen years that it has been in operation.

It also discusses the implications of the transition of the Living Wage movement from one following a direct action, community-centred strategy with the organisation of low-paid workers at its heart, to a less adversarial model seeking to form partnerships with employers, rather than directly challenging them. Such developments raise important questions about the representation and role of workers themselves in the future of the Living Wage movement, and whether the Foundation’s partnership-based approach is too reliant on the (potentially temporary) philanthropic goodwill of corporate sponsors.

This chapter makes a significant contribution in helping to fill an important gap within the established literature base on the UK Living Wage concerning the role and specific operations of the Living Wage Foundation itself, which at present is rather minimal (Heery, Hann, and Nash, 2017; Johnson, Koukiadaki, and Grimshaw, 2019). This chapter also builds on the literature of the past five years that examines more recent developments within the UK Living Wage movement more widely beyond the work of the Foundation, particularly concerning the role of non-Citizens UK actors in campaigning for Living Wage rates of pay, and the impact of the

introduction of the “National Living Wage” on the movement itself (Prowse and Fells, 2016; Brown, 2017; Sellers, 2017; Johnson, 2017; Prowse, Lopes and Fells, 2017; Hill, 2019).

It also seeks to contribute to the literature concerning the role of civil regulation as a means of promoting and facilitating higher wages, decent working standards, and other ethical considerations within the industrial relations field, as the role of the state in enforcing both adequate minimum rates of pay and effectively regulating against insecure and precarious forms of employment becomes ever more minimal (Williams, 2011; Heery, Abbot and Williams, 2014; Heery, Hann, and Nash, 2017; Johnson, Koukiadaki, and Grimshaw, 2019).

This chapter also explores the transition of the Living Wage movement from one with a solitary focus in campaigning for the raising of hourly rates of pay, to an actor that also advocates for the elimination of the wider root causes of in-work poverty within Britain, most specifically through encouraging employers to guarantee workers a certain number of hours of work in any given week to ensure them financial security in maintaining a decent standard of living.

The chapter begins with an analysis of the decision in 2011 to separate the campaigning arm of the Living Wage movement from the wider Citizens UK movement, and establish a formal body and accreditation-based model that would be responsible for the administration and maintenance of an accreditation network of “Living Wage Employers” across Britain. It places a particular emphasis on the Foundation’s decisions in recent years to increasingly focus on the wider decent work agenda rather than only hourly wage rates in isolation, particularly since the introduction of the “National Living Wage” in 2016, and the specific strategies and approaches that the Foundation has adopted as the body’s focus has widened.

The chapter also explores the findings of multiple interviews conducted with Foundation programme managers and leaders for this study, and discusses their insights into the work that they do, the thinking behind the specific projects and strategies that they have designed and implemented, and their own thoughts on the role of the Living Wage Foundation within the UK employment landscape. It also explores the strengths and the weaknesses of the accreditation model that they have developed, and the various criticisms of both the Foundation and the model itself that have emerged in the various interviews conducted for this thesis.

Finally, the chapter examines the relationship between traditional trade unions and the civil society campaign for the UK Living Wage, and the tensions between the two. It concludes with an analysis of the likely future direction of the Living Wage Foundation, and its impact on the UK labour market and the low-paid workers operating within it.

8.2. 2011: The establishment of the Living Wage Foundation

While a more extensive account of the full development of the Living Wage movement from 2001 to the present day is not within the scope of this thesis, this section is focused upon the establishment of the Living Wage in 2011 as a formal accreditation body. In May 2011, as support and popularity for the campaign for the Living Wage continued to grow across Britain following the movement's first full decade in operation, particularly in large cities outside of London such as Manchester, Glasgow and Leeds (Living Wage Foundation, 2011), Citizens UK officially launched the Living Wage Foundation, ten years after the campaign began. The Foundation was established with the remit of being an organisation dedicated to overseeing the formal accreditation of Living Wage employers through the creation of a publicly visible and professional accreditation network, with the body supported by a range of public and private funders. The launch of the Foundation, as a subsidiary of Citizens UK itself, was fundamentally concerned with "providing strength and coherence to the concept of a Living Wage, as well as momentum to the campaign" (Hirsh and Moore, 2015).

More widely, the launch of the Foundation also signalled a strategic change in the tactics employed by the Living Wage campaign in how they sought to persuade individual employers to voluntarily raise the wages of those workers paid below UK Living Wage rates of pay (Jameson, 2018), shifting the focus from an adversarial, direct action approach to exerting pressure on employers to raise pay rates, towards a friendlier approach, more in line with a professional accreditation body than a campaigning organisation. The Foundation's establishment was a key turning point in the campaign, with its clear-cut Living wage accreditation process providing the campaign with a polished, professional appearance that public and private sector employers responded positively to (Unison, 2015).

The Foundation was also tasked with furthering the campaign's success via three key areas, namely:

- **Intelligence.** Provide advice and support to employers implementing the Living Wage - best practice guides; case studies from leading employers; model procurement frameworks; access to specialist legal and HR advice.
- **Accreditation.** The 'Living Wage Employer' mark will become a recognised sign of good practice in employment. A multi-stakeholder board will oversee policy, including approaches to Living Wage calculations.
- **Influence.** The Foundation will work with Principal Partner organisations from a range of sectors. Partners will provide financial and strategic support to the Foundation.

(Hirsch and Moore, 2015)

Of these three roles, perhaps the most important in furthering the take-up of the Living Wage by employers within Britain was the establishment of an officially-recognised, publicly-accountable accreditation process. In order to become officially accredited, and as discussed in greater detail in chapter 6 of this thesis, employers must ensure that both all of their own staff as well as all on-site contractors working within their premises are paid at least the Living Wage, with the Living Wage Foundation providing support, consultation and advice on the implementation of this measure to those organisations committed to introducing it (Living Wage Foundation, 2015). Those accredited by the Foundation are then given the right to present a "Living Wage Employer" plaque within their organisations, along with a similar mark on their websites and in other areas publicly viewable to guests and customers.

Since 2011, this accreditation process has become a highly-valued mark of commitment for organisations wishing to demonstrate publicly their commitment to corporate social responsibility (Cadbury, 2006; Crane et al, 2008), providing important reputational benefits for those formally accredited with the Foundation. The ethical investment advisory body ShareAction has argued that not only are there clear benefits to becoming a Living Wage Employer, but that such a move also safeguards against further potential risks to an organisation:

Failing to provide a decent Living Wage and safe working conditions is unacceptable for any company in any sector. Consumers understand this. There exists a clear financial opportunity for companies that take a lead, and considerable risks for those who do not. Moreover, the upfront cost of this mutually beneficial risk management can be seen to be relatively modest in comparison with the potential risk of pay-related reputational damage, particularly for consumer-facing businesses.

(ShareAction, 2015)

This analysis is borne out by public opinion. A 2019 KPMG survey of over 5,000 consumers, for example, concluded that seven out of ten consumers would consciously decide to buy from employers formally accredited as Living Wage Employers, a rise of more than 10 per cent from the previous year (KPMG, 2018). By providing a clear and visible benchmark for employers to demonstrate their ethical standards, then, the Living Wage Foundation were seeking to capitalise on the recent growth of ethical consumerism in Britain, particularly among younger generations (Yeow, Dean and Tucker, 2014; Jones, 2017), as discussed in greater detail in chapter 2 of this thesis.

Such efforts were also key in persuading employers themselves of the strategic business benefits of becoming accredited Living Wage Employers within the Foundation's network, discussed in more detail in chapter 5 of this thesis. Linneker and Wills (2016) argue that "convincing employers of the reputational, and other benefits, of Living Wage accreditation is crucial under a voluntary policy regime," and the growing support from employers for paying the Living Wage, as well as an increasing number of organisations who are willing to be directly associated with the campaign and promote its objectives on its behalf, will be critical for the continued future success of the movement.

Following the body's establishment, the Foundation was also tasked with the responsibility to discuss and agree upon a clear methodology for calculating the non-London Living Wage rate, and a formula to ensure the figure was updated each financial year in an evidence-based manner. Before this, no single approach had been formally implemented to decide upon Living Wage rates outside of the capital (Hirsh and Moore, 2015). It was decided to utilise the approach taken by the Scottish Living Wage campaign, which drew on the work of the Centre for Research in Social Policy at Loughborough University, in conjunction with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

This formula calculated the optimum level that the Living Wage rate should be through extensive research into what items families require to afford an adequate standard of living, through what has been termed the “Minimum Income Standard” (Bradshaw et al, 2008), as discussed in greater detail in chapter 2 of this thesis. And while this calculation has been adapted and modified in the years since (as also detailed in chapter 2), it remains the case that it is the Living Wage Foundation that announces the new annual UK and London rates each November during “Living Wage Week,” and as a national body continue to be at the forefront of the wider UK Living Wage campaign’s efforts in encouraging employers to voluntarily raise the hourly rates of pay of their low-paid workers.

8.3. The Citizens UK/Living Wage Foundation relationship

The relationship between Citizens UK and the Living Wage Foundation remains a complex one. While the Living Wage Foundation is responsible for the establishment, maintenance, and growth of the professional network of accredited Living Wage Employers across Britain, new initiatives supporting the promotion of the UK Living Wage have continued to be developed by Citizens themselves.

In November 2015, for example, Citizens UK officially launched the “Living Wage People’s Movement”, which “seeks to harness the energy of ethical consumers by supporting local campaign groups to raise awareness and encourage employers in their towns and cities to pay the recommended Living Wage rates” (Living Wage People’s Movement, 2015). In addition to this, in January 2016 the Foundation officially established the Living Wage Commission to provide oversight of the annual calculation of Living Wage rates in the UK. Its official remit upon launch was to “also support [alongside the Living Wage Foundation] and promote the goals of the Living Wage as an attainable benchmark for employers committed to going above and beyond the statutory minimum” (Living Wage Commission, 2016).

The move was also an effort to further professionalise the campaign for the Living Wage, ensuring that its rate calculations were both robust and easily visible as well as understandable to the public and to interested parties (most specifically organisations interested in becoming accredited Living Wage Employers). It could also be seen as a renewed attempt to keep the campaign for the Living Wage visible in the minds of policymakers, employers and the public,

as the National Living Wage began to be implemented across the country from April 2016 onwards.

In more recent years, Citizens UK have focused their accompanying efforts to promote the Living Wage on less institutional strategies, and more individual campaigns for employers in specific sectors to become accredited with the Living Wage Foundation. Such campaigns have been developed in line with the strategies adopted during the first decade of the movement (2001-2011), specifically by targeting organisations that can more easily afford to pay their workers more and coordinating highly visible, worker-centred campaigns challenging them to pay a Living Wage, as opposed to those sectors with higher proportions of low pay such as retail and hospitality (Citizens UK, 2020). Most particularly this has focused upon Premier League football clubs, as well as universities, airports, and organisations in the law and technology sectors. One Living Wage Foundation programme manager, Daisy, explained this approach as one adopted selectively:

Then there's the kind of sectors where there's a clear campaign angle, where there's some really obvious unfairness points that are ripe to highlight through Citizens UK or partner campaigns and through actions, for example football clubs, universities, and airports. and it's such an obvious unfairness point that you can sort of point it out, and campaign on it.
Daisy, 2019

The rise in support for and recognition of the role of low-paid “key workers” during the COVID-19 lockdown has also resulted in the most recent Citizens UK campaign focusing on guaranteeing a Living Wage for all social care workers, at a time when over 500,000 are currently paid below Living Wage rates of pay (Citizens UK, 2020). This campaign has followed the established strategy of Citizens UK Living Wage campaigns putting workers themselves front and centre, with the campaign being launched by a care worker called Tabita, and the focus being upon the vital role that they do and the need for a Living Wage to help support them in their roles as carers:

My zero hours contract and minimum wage job left me with no safety net. A secure job with a real Living Wage would help me and many more care workers avoid such a struggle. If we don't go into the gladiator ring, then who will?
(Citizens UK, 2020)

Living Wage Foundation Director Katherine Chapman explained in an interview for this thesis that as the Foundation has risen in both size and ambitions, the relationship between the two arms of the movement have inevitably changed:

And obviously as we get bigger, and Citizens UK broadens out to new areas and campaigns . . . there's probably less Living Wage activity on the campaigning side than there used to be. But I think that's just a natural part of growth, and that there still are very live, very real Living Wage campaigns going on, but all of that is sort of inevitable, and not necessarily a bad thing, it's just the way that we've both grown as organisations.
Chapman, 2020

The gradual decrease of the “campaigning” side of the Living Wage movement also reflects the active decision to frame the Living Wage Foundation as a “professional” partner that employers can utilise to advise them on how to adopt and maintain higher ethical standards for their organisation, rather than an opposing force seeking to shame employers into doing the right thing. And for those employers who do require a prompt and some public pressure to implement the Living Wage, Chapman argues that the intended effect is of a “carrot and stick” strategy: “Citizens campaign at them, they decide to adopt it, and then we come in and show them how to do it.” One Foundation Programme Manager, Andrea, argued that one of the key factors in their success to date has been ensuring that they understand the difficulties employers may have initially when considering adoption of the Living Wage, and to be prepared to accept roadmap and milestone processes as a road to implementation rather than dismissing them outright:

We figure that it's much better to have more organisations on board, not just from the point of view of growing out the numbers and to say that we've grown, but also by having someone on board and pushing through the milestones, you are making sure that change happens: if you just say to someone "no sorry, you haven't met the criteria, see you later," then none of that change is going to happen, and at the end of the day we're here to try and improve pay, we're not just here to run an accreditation scheme. So, I think that approach has been really quite critical to our success.

Andrea, 2019

Another programme manager, Nick, spoke of the “magical combination” of a clear goal for employers to aim towards in their business ethics and corporate social responsibility strategies

(in this case the Living Wage), and of the understanding and support of an organisation like the Foundation in assisting them in reaching this goal:

We're also aware of the need for us to develop new programmes and strategies in terms of how will this work in the more challenging sectors, and what would a model of best endeavours look like for those sectors, to start that incremental change. So, it's almost like you need the magical combination of a clear benchmark standard, so the Living Wage in pay terms, but then you also need to have things in place to practically support organisations to get there. And sometimes perhaps, the right style and milder form of recognition for steps taken by employers working towards it, rather than just ruling them out.

Nick, 2019

Chapman argues that this is a particularly important point when attempting to gain accreditations in sectors with high levels of low pay, and that a “segmented” approach is taken for such hard-to-reach employers:

And then there's the sectors that are very much more challenging, like retail and hospitality, but where it would still be great to make inroads. And we try and segment those a bit more, and think about where we could make some inroads in those sectors: luxury hotel chains, or luxury boutique shops, that kind of thing, as a gateway into retail more widely. So, you do that to segment things, and then take it forward to others from there.

Chapman, 2019

Another senior member of the team interviewed for this project, Thea, reiterated their own belief that this strategy had been key to the Foundation’s success:

And I think that thinking about why the Foundation has been successful, it is because we have been quite pragmatic, and if you only go in and hit them with a stick, you're doing a disservice to the people on low pay, where you could make incremental changes in difficult sectors by focusing on more dedicated engagement with their employers.

Thea, 2019

A differentiated approach to separate sectors has also been applied to easier-to-reach employers, too. One phrase that emerged during successive interviews with Foundation staff for this project was that some sectors had more “low-hanging fruit” than others, explained by one Foundation Programme Manager as where the battle for *why* the Living Wage should be adopted does not need to be won, but rather:

Where it's already affordable for the organisations and it's more just about focused outreach management, and awareness-raising . . . you know companies like that where there are probably plenty more that would sign up, but you just need to do more awareness-raising and general relationship management stuff.

Nick, 2019

Interviewees highlighted the legal and technology industries in particular as sectors of the UK labour market that contain a lot of “low-hanging fruit,” where the proportion of low-paid workers within a workforce are minimal, but who would still be interested in accreditation if it was communicated effectively to them. Examples of such employers can be seen in the first findings chapter of this project, for example the London-based recruitment agency based in the gig economy, who became accredited following the suggestion to them of the organisational benefits of doing so through an external tourism body.

This supportive, piecemeal approach to implementation and accreditation is in clear contrast to the strategies employed by Citizens UK at the beginnings of the Living Wage movement, and is more in line with the partnership-based relationships taken by bodies like the BITC (Business in the Community) and the CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development) in how they interact with employers. The language and narratives utilised by the Living Wage Foundation in how they communicate with interested employers are also shared by bodies such as these: the Foundation does not “demand” that employers begin paying the Living Wage out of a sense of moral injustice, but they are “invited” to do so to reap the “business benefits” of accreditation (Living Wage Foundation, 2020).

With the Foundation now firmly taking the lead on how the Living Wage is framed and communicated to businesses and the general public in Britain today, it would seem more pertinent to view the movement for the UK Living Wage through the lens of a professional

accreditation body with a campaigning arm, rather than a fully-fledged campaign that also includes an accreditation network. In a further extension of this approach, Chapman argues that the ultimate ambition of the campaign is to make employers themselves the leaders of the movement, rather than making the Foundation and Citizens UK the moral arbiters policing the decisions made by individual organisations:

The ideal again, and I think this has been key to the success of the Foundation . . . is that you want to work with all your employers in a way where they are becoming the champions and the leaders of the movement, so that that is how you can have an impact beyond the numbers that you can reach, by facilitating employers indirectly to do more.
Chapman, 2019

When contrasted with comments from Citizens UK Living Wage campaign organisers explored in more detail in chapter 5 of this thesis, these remarks clearly demonstrate the evolution of the Living Wage movement over the past two decades: that while at the beginning of the campaign the focus was on putting low-paid workers front and centre, highlighting the impact that payment of the Living Wage would have on their individual lives, making employers themselves the focus is now of paramount concern. This shift in priorities reflects one of the key concerns and criticisms of how the UK Living Wage movement has developed in recent years, into a movement which prioritises both the needs and the perspectives of employers over the workers themselves who would benefit most from an organisation deciding to become a “Living Wage Employer.”

Such ambitions place the Living Wage Foundation as a rather unique actor in the UK industrial relations field: combining the roles of activist, facilitator, overseer, partner, and a champion of others in various ways and combinations. It remains to be seen in which directions the campaign will turn next, and how it will evolve in the future as the movement’s priorities and the socioeconomic landscape it operates within continues to change.

8.4. Tensions and Challenges

In interviews conducted for this project, remarks from Living Wage Foundation staff about the relationship with Citizens UK were broadly positive: however, there was a more varied breadth of opinion among those individuals operating on the Citizens side of the movement. On the

positive side, one community organiser, Lee, reflected on the “double act” approach to persuading a potential employer to begin paying the Living Wage that the movement can often deploy to constructive effect, utilising the example of one particular UK airport that were the focus of a direct-action campaign by the local regional chapter of Citizens:

The airport in particular have decided that they don't want to speak to us [because of our direct action]: and they promised us a meeting, and then reneged on that. So, it's kind of convenient that they can then have a separate conversation, within different parameters, with the Living Wage Foundation, and then afterwards we can have a conversation with them [the Foundation] to reframe our campaign.

Lee, 2018

This partnership, when applied correctly, enables the Living Wage movement to perform a successful pincer move on individual employers: pushing them towards becoming accredited through the threat of ongoing public direct actions highlighting the organisation’s refusal to pay decent wages as a first, more confrontational stage, and then transitioning to a more partnership-based approach to the Living Wage through discussions with the Foundation.

One organiser, Rachel, stated that such a strategy also enables organisations to “save face” after being publicly pushed into becoming a Living Wage Employer by utilising the Foundation’s emphasis on the business benefits of accreditation, and that “it is useful after you've forced someone to change their mind, as a means of giving them a reason to try and save face, for them to then be able to say that "oh we're doing it for the business benefits." This calls back to the scepticism expressed in chapter 5 of this thesis from Citizens organisers that employers are always being honest when reporting their primary motivations for accreditation to academic researchers. Lee also emphasised the double-act strategy’s advantages of helping to gain a wider understanding of how to reposition their campaigning approach for individual employers:

It helps us to calibrate our campaigning: because we do an action, and then somebody from the airport desperately calls the Living Wage Foundation and says "oh we're going to do this, we're going to do that." And then that allows us to gain some insights into how much they are going to do, how much the messages have sunk in and so forth.

(ibid.)

Organisers were also very frank about their concerns that the Living Wage movement has moved too far from its original focus, of organising low-paid workers and forming alliances with them to deliver creative direct actions as a means of publicly persuading employers to pay higher wages. One in particular, Penelope, argued that:

I think one of the big things about the Living Wage is what is more effective, carrot or stick? And I think the answer is that you need both. And whereas in the early days it was all stick, I think these days there's too much carrot now, and not enough stick.

Penelope, 2018

Lee also revealed that local government bodies, who had been broadly supportive of the Living Wage movement in general, had put pressure on Citizens to not go ahead with ongoing direct actions at one particular regional airport that was the focus of an individual Living Wage campaign against it:

We've had a bit of criticism . . . so the [local government], who have also been very supportive of the Living Wage . . . have really not liked, and put a significant amount of pressure on us to not do the actions at the Airport. Because it's going to come back to them, at some point. But we had to say to them, "get your act in gear, use your policy tools, and get it sorted yourselves then."

Lee, 2018

He argued further that there is a consistency to the way Citizens UK operates in its community organising approach to seeking to make change, and the "power of disruption" that their direct actions can create (so long as there is a balance found between making an impact and going too far):

And I think that's what's consistent about what Citizens does, is that it is always to some degree disruptive. And not in a "we're going to ruin your business" kind of way, but in . . . using innovative ways to make in-roads. And what we were doing at the airport was the same, it was annoying to them, and inconvenient, and they couldn't ignore it, but neither was it us chaining ourselves to a runway and stopping the airport functioning.

(Ibid.)

James argued that “money should be redistributed from the Living Wage Foundation” and redirected to more local direct actions, and that” it’s time-consuming . . . but we need more people doing that, all around the country.” In terms of where the Living Wage movement goes in the future, Lee identified the establishment of the Foundation in 2011 as a watershed moment in the evolution of the campaign’s tactics, and expressed a desire to return to the pre-2011 emphasis on direct action:

I think it's got to grow in terms of actions. So, if you look at the development over time, from 2001 it was almost all action, community organising and campaigning, and that was pretty much the case until 2011. And then with the Foundation, you basically have this big drop-off of action, and yeah, we need to pick it back up so that's there more equilibrium, and less imbalance. I think we're going to need better coordination between the Foundation, Citizens, and others leading Living Wage campaigns.

(ibid.)

Rachel, too, expressed a concern that the more the Foundation become “dominated” by large corporate sponsors, the greater the lack of desire from the movement would be for embarking on community-organised direct-action pursuits in the future, and that the balance between the Foundation and Citizens needed to be redressed:

But there is also a sense at the Living Wage Foundation that we need to keep these two things separate, and the more it gets dominated by big employers, the less keen they are on wanting to do more organising. But that's where the relationship with Citizens UK can work well, because Citizens can be doing things that the Foundation wouldn't necessarily do themselves. So, I think that broadly it works well, it's just at the minute a huge, huge imbalance: vast.

Rachel, 2018

Concern was also expressed that the movement’s shifting of responsibility for the Living Wage to the Foundation had prevented local Citizens chapters focusing on their own work in this area more fully:

And I think that one of the things is when the Living Wage Foundation was set up, because it was now an entity in itself, a lot of Citizens chapters thought "oh well they're

doing that, we'll go off and do other things, because they've got that covered." So actually, not that many Citizens chapters are now doing Living Wage stuff, which is a shame because there's still so much to do.

(ibid.)

Rachel made the argument that for the balance between the community organising, direct-action methods applied by Citizens UK to successfully work in tandem with the business-friendly, professional accreditation body approach led by the Living Wage Foundation, the Foundation itself also needs to ensure that it understands how Citizens operates:

So that kind of relationship can work quite well, but that requires somebody working at the Living Wage Foundation who respects organising and campaigning. And partly the issue is that as the Foundation becomes bigger and bigger, it becomes its own thing much more. And they've moved out of the Citizens UK offices now, which means that they are more disconnected, and see themselves as their own thing.

(ibid.)

Penelope argued strongly that while the Foundation could continue to be successful in raising the numbers of accredited Living Wage Employers across Britain as a Citizens-less solo venture, an organising approach was still required to ensure that accreditation numbers were rising in the sectors with the highest proportions of low-paid workers:

They probably could sustain themselves on just people who want to do it . . . but if you want to get the ones that really matter, the big ones, the ones that have lots of low-paid employees and which requires a significant amount of political movement, and who don't want to do it, then organising is the way to make that happen.

Penelope, 2018

These insights touch on similar sentiments expressed by Johnson, Koukiadaki, and Grimshaw's 2019 analysis of the UK Living Wage campaign, who highlight that "nearly three-quarters of accredited Living Wage employers are small and medium-sized enterprises with fewer than 50 employees," and that while an estimated 120,000 workers across the UK have directly benefited from wage increases as a result of their employer voluntarily adopting the UK or London Living Wage since 2011, there are still around 5.75 million jobs (22 per cent of the nation's total) across

the UK that pay less than the Living Wage. Given these figures, there is a concern that the campaign is not currently as successful at persuading major employers in industries with large sectors of low-paid workers to come aboard (for example in retail, or hospitality) as it is for less significant SMEs, in terms of the numbers of workers who would be affected by accreditation. This was an issue raised by numerous individuals within interviews for this project, including the HR Director of one recently un-accredited organisation, Zoe:

I think what they really need to look at is the percentage and number of people who move from below the Living Wage to above it. Because they don't, they look at banks and other companies that are becoming accredited, and those places already pay the majority of their people over and above the Living Wage rate already. They might have a small catering contingent, a small cleaning contingent, that might affect them, but as a percentage of their overall staffing costs, that's probably marginal.

Zoe, 2019

Zoe also suggested that the movement place a larger focus on those industries where a move to the Living Wage by employers would have a more significant impact on workers:

They need to be identifying the number of businesses they have where there is that shift: where have they actually made a difference in impacting their employees' wages. Because I would argue that for a lot of those businesses it really doesn't make that much difference: they just get the accreditation, but actually, in terms of shifting their pay, and actually having a massive impact on the people that they employ, I don't believe that it does necessarily.

(ibid.)

Another still-accredited employer also raised the point that without ensuring that organisations are becoming accredited in the most important industries, the "Living Wage Employer" accreditation label risks becoming one more award amongst many that means very little:

Because they're easy targets to get signed up, and I would love to know amongst [accredited companies] what percentage of their workforce was already paid below the Living Wage rate before accreditation. Because to make it really. . .to have more of an impact, more people need to be paid it, because I don't know if otherwise it just becomes

something for sign-up's sake.

Roger, 2019

Thus, while accreditation numbers are high in certain sectors, such as banking, law, and among tech firms, it is raising the numbers of accredited employers within industries such as retail and hospitality that would have the most significant impact in raising the wages of low-paid workers across Britain. This is likely to be an even more difficult challenge in a post-pandemic economic landscape, with the very same industries with the largest numbers of low-paid workers also some of the most heavily impacted by the ramifications of the onset of COVID-19, in particular retail and hospitality. It is very likely that there will be a significant amount of economic upheaval across both the global and the national economic landscapes in the post-pandemic era, and as a “new normal” is constructed (IFS, 2020).

These criticisms allude to the same issues explored by Hoque (2003) on the effectiveness of the “Investors in People” accreditation award, discussed in greater detail in chapter 3 of this thesis, and that within certain accredited employers within that network, “IiP accreditation has, over time, come to represent little more than a ‘plaque on the wall’” (p. 566). Hoque also raised the issue of organisations engaging in “badge collecting” when it came to external accreditation schemes, with awards sought for superficial reasons over more credible ones:

Flavour-of-the-month ‘badge collecting’ was seen as leading to a more superficial engagement with initiatives, and as a result, attention was only really paid to IiP when organizations applied for re-accreditation.

(ibid.)

While the strict oversight of the Living Wage accreditation guidelines removes some of the danger of standards slipping among accredited employers (seen for example in the enforcement of ensuring that subcontracted workers are also paid the Living Wage, as discussed in chapter 6), the most basic level of engagement with the Living Wage movement for those accredited organisations who have only had a small proportion of their workforce affected by the move remains a real risk.

On another level, there is also the risk that the large corporate entities that do currently publicly express a large level of enthusiasm for the Living Wage (for example banks and large legal

firms) are not the organisations that are the most important in influencing other employers to accredit. To have a large retailer like John Lewis, or a large supermarket like Aldi sign up as accredited Living Wage Employers and publicly communicating the benefits of the Living Wage to the UK business community would have a much larger impact on raising wages for more low-paid workers, for example. There is a question, then, of whether the Foundation’s ultimate ambition is to simply grow their network, or to grow it in the right areas, where uprating workers to Living Wage rates can make the most difference.

8.5. Currently accredited employer concerns

These concerns, that the employers most supportive of the Living Wage Foundation are also broadly organisations that are less important in the wider mission of raising as many low-paid workers’ wages as possible, also speak to concerns from both employers and organisers interviewed for this project that the Foundation have become too “friendly” with corporations supportive of their mission, rather than challenging them more directly. One Citizens organiser interviewed, Penelope, argued that the risk of relying too heavily on the largesse of corporate supporters was that such arrangements could change at any movement, and that an emphasis on organising low-paid workers to deliver change was a more concrete means of achieving the movement’s goals:

Because I think at the moment, we are too dependent on the goodwill of certain corporates. And it's good to have those guys on board, but it's currently in their self-interest to pay the Living Wage, and it's not necessarily going to be in their self-interest forever . . . but it will always be in low-paid workers self-interest to be paid more, so they are better people for us to be putting our money and investment in, in terms of time and resources and so on.

Penelope, 2019

One specific manifestation of these concerns raised in a number of interviews are the tensions around the Foundation’s “Service Provider” scheme, in which large employers receive a separate accreditation mark for agreeing to pay all workers within their head office the Living Wage, as well as agreeing to offer an alternative approach in each contract that they bid for in which contracted workers are paid the Living Wage, but which they do not have to commit to demanding beyond offering it as an option. One employer interviewed in particular raised this as

a key issue, arguing that more often than not the higher accreditation mark achieved by fully-accredited employers cannot be sufficiently differentiated by the public from the less-committed version awarded to “Living Wage Service Providers”:

I think the issue with the service provider accreditation is that it makes it look like some sectors have got their act together and dealt with the problem [of low wages], but that actually if you scrape below the veneer, actually there's still quite a lot of workers in even those companies earning less than the Living Wage . . . So, I would love to see that level of accreditation ditched.

Deborah, 2019

These concerns also reflect larger concerns among employers interviewed for this project about the accreditation model developed and enforced by the Living Wage Foundation. The HR Director for one organisation in particular, who had previously been a fully-accredited Living Wage Employer but who has subsequently become un-accredited, argued that the stringency of the boundaries on where exactly London Living Wage rates of pay had to be paid and when national ones were required was a key factor in the firm removing itself from the scheme, with the Foundation (from their perspective) providing no opportunity to talk flexibly about the specifics of their case:

And we just felt that there was no opportunity to discuss it with the Living Wage Foundation, they were just so set, and I think they were just after some really, some much bigger [employers in their sector] . . .so they weren't really, they didn't really listen to us. And our Head of Marketing tried to discuss with them on numerous occasions what could we do, how could we continue to be accredited, and they just weren't interested in being flexible at all.

Zoe, 2019

Communication problems within the relationship between the Foundation and accredited employers was a frequent remark across interviews for this project, with some remarking on emails not replied to, and others of offers of help and support for the campaign ignored. One employer interviewed stated that “I actually got to the point where I thought to myself if I were employing people, I wouldn't employ you, you'd be out of my team.” These were often balanced

however with an acknowledgement of the resource issues that the body faces, and how its ambitions to manage a network of thousands of accredited employers with a staff of less than thirty must be an extraordinarily large challenge.

Related to these complaints of communication issues were concerns that the Foundation was not flexible enough in understanding the challenges faced by employers in raising wages for their lowest-paid workers, and that a greater level of flexibility would yield a higher number of supporters from a wider array of organisations across the UK. One employer in particular argued that:

I just think that they need to work more collaboratively about some of the challenges that employers might face, especially in the longer-term, in moving towards becoming an Living Wage Employer, and I think they could look at some of the industries where a larger population of people would be impacted by the Living Wage, and looking at what they can do to support those organisations.

Roger, 2019

Another argued that a change to the rigid structure of employers having to strictly adhere to annual (and often large) rises in wages, regardless of circumstances, could also be looked at in a more flexible way:

So maybe rather than every year it gets hiked up to a certain rate that you then have to pay, could they look at something more gradual, across a year? And just really working more with organisations to identify what some of those challenges might be, if it's going to keep increasing by so much each year, and if employers are finding it challenging how they can help, and whether they could be part-accredited or something, you know is there an opportunity for employers to become part-accredited if you maintain it outside of London, but not in London?

Samantha, 2019

One organisation that had become unaccredited also expressed disappointment that there had been no contact from the Foundation since they had become unaccredited, with no attempt made to understand their particular situation or what could be done to help resolve it:

We haven't had any contact with them since we left, and I think that's very disappointing too. Because they could have kept a dialogue going, but they were really poor with having dialogue with us anyway, you know they got us on board and then that was it, after that communication was just really poor, and I think they could have done a lot more in terms of mining discussion, and making sure that people felt part of the movement, as well.

Zoe, 2019

Related to these comments on the poor communication skills displayed by the Foundation were complaints about a more institutionalised issue of communication that some employers were not happy with, namely the way that the announcement of the rates by which the UK Living Wage and London Living Wage rates are raising each year being communicated publicly without prior warning during London Living Wage week each November, and expected to be applied by each accredited employer the following spring at the beginning of the next financial year.

Many argued that such a small timeframe was not enough of a period to adequately prepare for these additional costs to an organisation's overall wage bill, and that an indication of what the rises are likely to be should be communicated to employers in clearer terms beforehand, to enable them to financially forecast in a more clear-sighted way. A lack of earlier communication on future Living Wage rises was also stated to be one of the primary motivations for one employer to become unaccredited from the Foundation's network:

But he [the firm's owner] was just like "when's it going to stop, when are they going to stop increasing it?" Because if they had laid it out, the increases ahead, and you know I know they always said that they are going to get to a particular point and then it would stop, but you know if they'd laid it out and we'd had a better idea at the beginning of how it might increase, then it would have informed our decision better.

Zoe, 2019

These criticisms and concerns reflect the fact that while the Living Wage movement has achieved an incredible amount of success in the past two decades, this success has not come without its own considerable difficulties and growing pains. While the Citizens UK/Foundation "carrot and stick" strategy towards persuading individual employers to accredit can work well when applied correctly, then, tensions remain between the two arms of the movement, and the

opposing strategies of establishing a partnership-based relationship with employers, or challenging them in a more confrontational way via worker- and community-driven direct actions.

8.6. The Changing Role and Representation of Workers in the Living Wage Movement

One consequence of a move from a direct-action, community organising approach to campaigning for the Living Wage and towards a more formal, partnership-based strategy with employers, is the gradual erosion from workers as being at the heart of the Living Wage movement.

This is particularly true of those organisations discussed within this thesis which became accredited with the Living Wage Foundation primarily through conversations with Foundation staff members driven by the motivations of an ethically-minded employer, rather than for example an organisation that was more coerced into accreditation from the threat of direct action from a Citizens UK campaign. In such a scenario, the management of a company commits to an arrangement with an independent labour market accreditation body, and a Living Wage is then bestowed upon the lowest-paid workers of said company's workforce: at no point are the workers most affected by such a change in a position to effectively campaign for such a change, or to have any sort of responsibility or ownership over the process by which the agreement was arranged. Within such situations, workers are completely divorced from the bargaining process, in contrast to more traditional methods of collective bargaining within workplaces, facilitated by established trade unions of which many workers are members. This means that they have no ownership over either the struggle to persuade an employer to pay the Living Wage, nor the victory in achieving such an outcome.

As alluded to above, a number of individuals interviewed for this project expressed a number of concerns that while the organisation of low-paid workers is what the origins of the Living Wage movement emerged from, this was no longer the primary focus of the campaign since the establishment of the Living Wage Foundation in 2011. One organiser, Rachel, stated that the time-consuming nature of organising workers put it at a disadvantage in arguing internally for this approach to be a key priority for the movement, in contrast to the Living Wage Foundation taking the lead:

One thing that I feel very strongly about is organising low-paid workers. Because I think a criticism that is accurate, is that all these campaigns are great, but many of them don't actually involve workers, or the workers involved are not as central as they should be. And organising workers is hard work, time-consuming, and nobody funds it, so it's actually quite difficult for me to justify doing, and so I can only do one of those things in-depth in the course of a year.

Rachel, 2019

Another, Penelope, suggested that the establishment of a new grouping that could emphasise the importance of organising low-paid workers could help to rebalance the current status quo:

So, what I'd like to do is to look at how we build an association of low-paid workers, who can help drive the Living Wage and retain it, but also look at other issues that are relevant to them, and not necessarily in the workplace.

Penelope, 2019

Many of those spoken with were keen to emphasise the important role that low-paid workers can play in facilitating successful Living Wage campaigns that can help convince major employers to voluntarily raise their wages. Reiterating one of the key arguments of chapter 5 of this thesis, another organiser, Lee, spoke of the importance of the existence of key individuals within workplaces which can help to drive campaigns forward:

And there was a particular woman called [name] who was crucial to this, who had a bit more about her, and had been a union member elsewhere, and she basically organised them herself, and without a [name], it's really hard to run Living Wage campaigns. Because you need someone inside who can basically take a bit of heat, and the others respect, so she would get them to do stuff that they just wouldn't have done without her. So, it's about finding those key figures.

Lee, 2018

Penelope reiterated that to ensure that the most important employers are successfully persuaded to begin paying the Living Wage, “if you want to get the ones that really matter, the big ones, the ones that have lots of low-paid employees and which requires a significant amount of political

movement, and who don't want to do it, then organising is the way to make that happen.” As discussed in more detail above, the increasing focus within the Living Wage Foundation itself on a partnership with employers means that by default there is less of a focus on a partnership and alliance with low-paid workers themselves, which is perhaps paradoxical when they are the central actors and final recipients of any rises in wage rates within the workplace.

This highlights one of the key differences between a workplace-external civil society campaign for the Living Wage, fronted by a professional accreditation body, and a traditional internal-workplace collective bargaining approach to raising wages, fronted by established trade unions: that due to its external nature, workers are more often than not spectators to fights to raise their own wages, rather than participants themselves.

8.7. Tensions with Traditional Trade Unions

The development of the Living Wage movement has also challenged the primacy of trade unions as being the sole voice fighting for wage rises within the workplace, and this has led to the emergence of philosophical and territorial disputes between trade unions and the campaign. One informal, often categorically-unattributable theme that ran through a number of interviews for this project concerned the challenges and tensions between the Living Wage campaign and more traditional trade unions. Many of these sentiments expressed frustration that trade unions were facilitating an active level of disruption of the Living Wage movement as a whole, and specific disruptions at a local and regional level in particular. One Citizens UK organiser, Lee, recalled the role that a number of separate trade unions played in sabotaging efforts to conduct direct actions at one UK airport in particular:

. . . The unions have played a pretty malign role in that campaign, where they've actively fought us, and undermined the workers there. And it's because they negotiated a shit pay deal. And we've never made the action or the campaigns about the unions at all, but obviously it makes them look terrible, because they agreed a terrible deal with management for two years.

Lee, 2018

Beyond this particular dispute, Lee also argued that there is a territorial element to traditional trade unions' opposition to a civil society Living Wage campaign:

But also, it's because they are very territorial. So, there are two unions there that are fighting one another, and they see it through the lens of recruitment, and they care more about recruitment than about the pay increases, very old school union fights. And they've collaborated and colluded with management on it, they've put out statements on behalf of management saying things like "the Living Wage issue is solved, the union has negotiated a deal," and it's all bullshit. And I had the Assistant Regional Secretary of Unite on the phone to me before Christmas saying "please don't do this action."

(ibid.)

Penelope also highlighted that within those workforces where trade union membership was low, and there exists less of a self-interest motive for unions to commit resources, Citizens UK could provide a more effective ally of low-paid workers over traditional trade unions in fighting for higher wages. This was especially true in fighting for wage rises for workers at CSE1:

We reframed it from being an internal, industrial discussion, because the unions, [union name] and others, had pushed for this already, but hadn't got very far, and it wasn't enough in their self-interest to really drive it, because they haven't got enough members in those outsourced areas.

Penelope, 2018

This reframing of the narrative of the fight for the Living Wage, from an internal workplace dispute to an employer's own wider ethical responsibilities to treat their workers fairly, speaks to the evolution and expansion in recent years of how the interests of low-paid workers are fought for, and which actors are involved in these struggles.

Much of the academic literature around the early years of the Living Wage campaign placed a high emphasis on the tensions and challenges of succeeding in convincing employers to adopt the Living Wage, and for those actors behind Living Wage campaigns to work effectively together to enable this to happen. Luce (2005) examined in particular the tensions and interplay between campaigners for the Living Wage and trade unions, warning that "not all union leaders are convinced of the opportunities for translating living-wage campaigns into new organizing. . . . In fact, some assert that the campaigns hurt organizing efforts." Holgate (2009, p. 50) explored this theme further in terms of the tensions within the UK Living Wage campaign and traditional

British trade unions, stating that “the association between London Citizens and the trade unions has been likened to the early stage of a troubled personal relationship – sometimes on and sometimes off – with each party criticising the other.”

Sellers (2017) has highlighted the tensions between the Citizens UK “social movement model” of campaigning for higher wages as a challenge to traditional trade union’s established “servicing model,” “in which trade union officials provide representation and bargaining as services to union members” (p. 792), and the conflict between these two models creating situations where the different sets of actors are “accidentally treading on each other’s toes.” A distillation of these issues is revealed in the following anecdote:

One trade union officer complained to me that they had turned up at a London hospital to discuss the implementation of the 2004 NHS Agenda for Change the national pay agreement, which was the result of a very complicated and long-winded negotiation process, only to find a living wage demo at the gates telling her members that “the union rates were not enough”.

(ibid, p. 793)

Sellers (2017) has also argued that “trade unions in the UK have sometimes taken the view that negotiating wages should be exclusively the business of trade unions through free collective bargaining” (ibid., p. 791), and that this has often led to tensions across the UK industrial relations landscape in both current and historical contexts. Sellers points out, for example, that “the TUC’s Joint Committee on the Living Wage (1927-1929) could not actually agree on any measures on wages themselves, but instead proposed that low wages be addressed by state help,” as well as that “UK trade unions used to argue against the introduction of a general statutory minimum wage, arguing that it would reduce the incentives to join a union” (ibid, p. 792). Existing tensions between trade unions and new actors in the wage negotiation sector, then, are not without historical precedent.

More recently, Johnson, Koukiadaki, and Grimshaw (2019) have highlighted the challenges for established trade unions in the light of the dominance of the Living Wage Foundation’s accreditation network as the generally accepted structure for how wage rises are won within the UK today:

The dominant role of the Living Wage Foundation and Citizens UK in establishing the accreditation system potentially poses challenges for traditional labour organisations in respect of negotiating living wage agreements with employers, and leveraging living wage campaigns to organise low-paid workers.

(Johnson, Koukiadaki, and Grimshaw, 2019, p. 326)

The authors argue that “a key objective for the unions and workers is to leverage localised agreements to build more general upward pressure on pay and conditions,” but highlight a theme also discussed within this chapter of the consequences of the Living Wage campaign turning from a worker-centred movement into:

A symbol of business ethics and reputation, often under the broad banner of Corporate Social Responsibility, rather than as a direct response to campaign pressure or trade union activity around low pay and inequality.

(*ibid.*, p. 326)

Others have noted how trade unions have sometimes conducted their own Living Wage campaigns independently of the “main” campaign, in recognition of the tensions and challenges between the two actors (Prowse and Fells, 2016). Examining the lessons derived from over 130 living wage campaigns across the world, Luce has concluded that it takes a wide breath of different actors to work together to fight for decent working standards on a regional, national or international basis, in this case in the fight for higher wages for low-paid workers:

The real contribution of the living-wage movement for labour comes in the form of lessons learned from 10 years of organizing. Living-wage campaigns usually win, but the campaigns are often hard fought. The organizing that is required to get the ordinances passed and enforced is an amalgamation of the best practices of community, faith-based, and labour organizations.

(Luce, 2005)

These findings reflect how the priorities and objectives of trade unions and Living Wage campaigners may sometimes be at odds with each other, with the potential for the singular focus of achieving higher wages for low-paid workers to clash with the more expansive remit of trade

unions to protect all workers, and raise wider working conditions, along with more parochial concerns about territorial disputes. For example, an employer could utilise a publicly-recognised “Living Wage Employer” accreditation label as a means of appearing strong on business ethics and working conditions with regards to their public image, but continue to facilitate less decent work standards in other areas: for instance, by employing workers on insecure contracts, operating unsafe working conditions, or attempting to exempt interns from receiving adequate rates of pay.

The tensions between trade unions and the Living Wage campaign is an area that bears further merit, and is likely one that will continue to require greater scrutiny from scholars in the coming years. Despite repeated attempts to secure interviews from trade union representatives for this research to understand more fully trade union perspectives on the Living Wage movement, none were forthcoming, with unions themselves along with individual representatives extremely reluctant to discuss the impact of the emergence of an independent Living Wage campaign on how higher wages are bargained for within individual workplaces and industries. It is perhaps inevitable that an external civil society campaign directly calling for changes to low-paid workers’ wages and working conditions, overlapping so heavily with the aims and objectives of traditional trade unions, would provoke a wide degree of mistrust and questions over the ownership of workers’ struggles, and it remains to be seen whether a more mutually beneficial relationship between the two actors can be constructed in the future.

8.8. The National Living Wage: A Challenge to the Living Wage Movement

In July 2015, what could be considered one of the most significant challenges to the campaign for the Living Wage was announced by Chancellor George Osborne in his summer budget: the introduction in April 2016 of a “National Living Wage” (NLW) for all workers over the age of 25 in Britain, at the rate of £7.20 an hour, with no higher rate for those in London. This was in contrast to the respective £8.25 national and £9.40 London Living Wage rates promoted by the Living Wage campaign itself at the time, with the NLW calculated based on median earnings in contrast to the campaign’s methodology discussed above that takes into account the cost of living. There were also key differences with planned raises for the respective rates in future years, too, with rate increases for the campaign being decided upon based on the increasing cost

of living, and the NMW (via the Low Pay Commission) based on reaching 60 per cent of median earnings (Osborne, 2015).

The rate at which the NLW was initially set was also criticised by academics and researchers because of its projected minimal impact on in-work poverty, with the Institute for Fiscal Studies calculating that it would only raise household incomes by less than 1 per cent on average (Browne and Hood, 2016), and the Resolution Foundation arguing that some households would be on average £3,000 a year worse off even after its implementation, due to the accompanying cutbacks to a number of existing social security avenues of support such as Working Tax Credits (Bell, 2016). From the perspective of the Living Wage movement, however, the challenge was in communicating to the wider public the differences between the UK Living Wage and the new “National Living Wage,” and ensuring that employers were still committed to the former. Brown (2017) called the introduction of the NLW the latest step in “the toxic politicising of the National Minimum Wage,” and contrasted the Foundation and the state’s priorities as such that while “it makes sense for the Living Wage to seek to protect decent standards of living. . . the NMW has had to concentrate on not damaging employment” (p. 787), arguing that the two separate rates were at odds with each other in terms of priorities.

While the campaign immediately welcomed the higher wage floor announced by Osborne, with Living Wage Foundation Director Rhys Moore calling the move a “massive victory for Citizens UK and those . . . who have campaigned for a Living Wage since 2001” (Moore, 2015), the Foundation was also clear that the NLW was *not* the same as the independently-set rates calculated by the Resolution Foundation for the campaign itself, given the emphasis on median earnings over the cost of living for individual families. Moore argued that “without a change of remit for the Low Pay Commission, this is effectively a higher National Minimum Wage, and not a Living Wage” (ibid).

In the months following the announcement of the NLW the campaign delivered a high-energy strategy of explaining to the public the differences between the NLW and the wage rates promoted by the campaign itself (Living Wage Foundation, 2016), with a key emphasis on the fact that the new NLW rate is “a change to the national minimum wage, and not a Living Wage”, as well as that the new rate does not apply to workers under the age of 25, nor contains a separate rate for London reflecting the higher cost of living in the capital.

There were concerns within the campaign that the high-profile introduction of the NLW would have an extremely detrimental impact on the movement's ability to both persuade new employers to sign up as accredited Living Wage Employers, but also to prevent currently accredited employers from transitioning their organisations away from paying the Living Wage to simply pay the NLW rate (Chigbo, 2015). Internal discussion also focused upon the possibility of changing the name of the campaign to “the Real Living Wage,” to differentiate between the two separate rates of pay (Stewart, 2016). The launch of the Living Wage Commission in January 2016, discussed more above, can also be seen as part of a strategy to ensure that the campaign remains both highly visible, and highly credible to the public and to potential Living Wage Employers.

Nevertheless, the campaign's fears did not come to pass: the number of organisations accredited as Living Wage Employers in fact doubled to over 2,000 during the period in which the NLW was introduced, including a quarter of FTSE 100 companies and largescale and high-profile employers including IKEA, Nestle, National Grid, Nationwide, Unilever, and the Houses of Parliament (Living Wage Foundation, 2016). Despite the continuation of spending cuts to local authorities since 2010, councils across Britain have also continued to sign up as Living Wage Employers since the announcement of the NLW, with over 100 local authorities now officially accredited (Living Wage Foundation, 2020). This has also had a knock-on effect for the number of workers guaranteed at least the Living Wage, as a number of councils have demanded compliance from their subcontractors to also pay workers the Living Wage themselves in line with Foundation accreditation rules, while ensuring that EU procurement rules are not breached (Ramshaw, 2013). There has also been vocal support for the campaign's Living Wage as opposed to the NLW from existing Living Wage Employers, with one manufacturing firm in Kent arguing strongly that:

Viewed as an increase to the national minimum, the government's proposal is nonetheless a welcome start. A living wage, however, it is clearly not – and the distinction is important. For, by co-opting the terminology of the living wage, Mr Osborne diverts attention away from the real Living Wage campaign, muddying the ethical waters still further and providing cover for businesses to continue to pay less than

they should.

(Whitlock, 2015)

In both numbers and support, it is clear that the government's introduction of the National Living Wage accelerated the campaign for the Living Wage in the UK by increasing both its public profile and the number of employers accredited with the Living Wage Foundation, rather than dampened its appeal in any way. Gavin Kelly, Chair of the Resolution Foundation, has argued that:

When it comes to employers, some want to aim higher than mere legal compliance. In part that's because it feels like the right thing to do for their workforce, but also because it brings direct business benefits in the form of reduced staff turnover and greater employee commitment.

(Kelly, 2016)

Within the campaign, however, discussions were being undertaken about whether or not the introduction of the National Living Wage meant the end of the road for the UK Living Wage campaign. In interviews for this project, Foundation staff members were very clear that bringing the movement to a close was a very real consideration at the time. One recalled that "in that period of time we brought together leaders and our key advisory council and employers and others, to have that conversation of "so this has happened, do we stop? Do we rebrand? Do we just carry on?" Another remembered it as "kind of an existential moment for us," with another stating that:

I do think that when the National Living Wage came in, we had to think about what does that mean for the long-term future of things (the campaign), not just the immediate term. And I suppose on the one hand it was like what if the strategy was successful, and we see new accreditations dropping off?

Rachel, 2018

Living Wage Foundation Director Katherine Chapman explained this extensive process of deliberation, and what it entailed:

We did a huge consultation exercise, we worked with a branding and messaging company who gave us some pro-bono support, we did a survey through the Living Wage Employer network, and we had a lot of debate around "should we rename, how should we respond to this?"

Chapman, 2019

While the Conservative Party and the Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne were much criticised at the time for their use of the "Living Wage" title and the impact it would have on the UK Living Wage campaign (Frith, 2015), there was ultimately no prospect of the "National Living Wage" being renamed anything less damaging in reflection of its impact on the campaign. And regardless of whether the term was replicated for short-term popularity reasons, or to undercut the campaign itself (given the inevitable criticism that a government will face when there is a fully-fledged movement consistently declaring its own legal minimum wage policies inadequate), the impact was the same: immediate confusion about what the term "Living Wage" now meant within Britain, and whether any reputational benefits for organisations labelled as accredited "Living Wage Employers" would disappear now that seemingly all businesses were deemed by some to be paying a living wage in some form or another.

Such public confusion is why the campaign focused their response upon the impact that the NLW would have on the movement's public image, and the narratives that employers and the public took away from their existing knowledge of what they were seeking to achieve: or, to put it more briefly, the damage that had been done to their "brand." This was a vital commodity to keep hold of and maintained at a high quality, given the Foundation's accreditation model relies on persuading organisations to voluntarily sign up with them, as well as the aforementioned reputational advantages of the "Living Wage Employer" label. During these deliberations, Chapman recalls that her own "gut instinct" was that "no, we should stick with this, and keep the name and reclaim this," recalling that:

It was really clear from the people in that room who said that "no we haven't won, because it's not a living wage: we do want you to rebrand, but because you're as big as you we don't think you can completely rebrand, and we definitely think you should keep fighting for what we all believe is the right thing to do."

(ibid.)

Given this overarching consensus that the movement still had some way to go, it was agreed to “rebrand” the Living Wage as “the Real Living Wage,” to differentiate it from the government’s own National Living Wage, and, as explained by Chapman, “to really zoom in on messaging and in all of our communications on the differences between our rates and the National Living Wage,” as well as to “reiterate that ours is more focused on the cost of living, and really zoom in on that as the thing that we are about.” Another individual involved in these decisions argued that “it wasn’t even really a rebrand, it was just a change in the way that we talk about what we do, to be the Real Living Wage not just the Living Wage, which is a nice simple way to differentiate us.”

This differentiation was helped by the differences in how the National Living Wage and Real Living Wage rates were calculated, too, with the NLW calculated according to “what the market can bear” and an ambition of raising legal minimum wage rates to 60 per cent of median earnings (HRM Treasury, 2019), and the RLW arrived at through estimating the average cost of living in Britain (Resolution Foundation, 2020). Another differentiating factor was the campaign’s original “London Living Wage” which reflects the higher cost of living in the capital, a measure not replicated by existing legal minimum wage standards.

Further reinforcement that the campaign still had momentum came from a score of employers newly interested in accreditation, with one Foundation programme manager, Stephen, explaining that:

The impact is that we just got more and more and more businesses to sign up. Because they were saying "we do more than the legal minimum, and we want to be recognised for it." So, it put it on the agenda of lots of businesses who wouldn't have heard about it otherwise, which is quite interesting. And our accreditation network has actually doubled in size since 2016, when it was announced.

Stephen, 2019

Regardless of the internal ramifications for those within the campaign itself, the introduction of the National Living Wage was nevertheless an important moment in demonstrating the substantial impact that the UK Living Wage movement had had during its then fifteen years of existence, on both the British political and employment landscape. Chapman recalls that “it was a huge moment for the campaign, the fact that we were able to influence ministers and have an

impact on the minimum wage the way that we have is just amazing,” with another colleague, Daisy, arguing that:

Obviously, it was a huge win for the Living Wage campaign: you know it's eighteen years old, and it moved a Conservative government to increase minimum wages in the country. And as a progressive policy, a Conservative government doesn't normally do that. And the acknowledgement is that it's called the National Living Wage, inspired by the Living Wage campaign, and it wouldn't even be on the agenda without us. So, it's a huge win for the campaign.

Daisy, 2019

Chapman also credits the NLW for allowing the Foundation “more of a say in the conversation on what minimum wages should be” in Britain, and almost perversely contributed to greater awareness of the Living Wage by “in some ways it's kept people thinking "oh the Living Wage, I've heard of that!" So, it has in some ways been a positive thing as well.”

These sentiments are reinforced by the continued growth of the body’s accreditation network since this period, demonstrating that the campaign remains in rude health despite this particularly challenging era of the Foundation’s development. However, the introduction of the National Living Wage also provided the impetus for the campaign to broaden their focus from a sole consideration of hourly rates of pay, and to move more substantially into the wider “decent work” agenda.

8.9. From the Living Wage to the Decent Work Agenda

While the evolution and development of the wider “decent work” agenda is covered more extensively in chapter 2 of this thesis, this section is primarily concerned with exploring the Living Wage Foundation’s increasing transition towards and into this area of the employment landscape since the introduction of the National Living Wage in 2016, most specifically through the introduction of the “Living Hours” project.

For any campaign dedicated solely to raising hourly rates of pay as a means of lifting workers out of in-work poverty, one of the most obvious criticisms it is exposed to is whether such actions are enough to effectively safeguard individuals from falling back into poverty: or, more pertinently, is a focus on hourly wages enough in an era of increasingly insecure and precarious

employment, where established 9-5 working patterns and an adequate number of hours of labour per week are not guaranteed for millions of workers?

Following on from the introduction of the National Living Wage in 2016, and the decision to continue with the Living Wage movement, the campaign began to consider how to widen their focus to the larger causes of in-work poverty in Britain. Chapman recalled that “the threat of the National Living Wage put some urgency under” these discussions, arguing that:

It was a chance to move on with the campaign as well. But not at all to give the impression that the Living Wage is done and dusted, because it really isn't, it's more about using the unique model that we've got to figure out where else we can push for change, and where employers want to work with us.

(ibid.)

Consulting the Foundation’s pre-existing accreditation network of employers on what they perceived as the most important areas for the campaign to focus upon, hours of work emerged as a crucial issue that deserved more scrutiny, with one Programme Manager stating that “there was an appetite within the network to do it, as well as among us.” From these discussions came the development and launch of the “Living Hours” accreditation scheme, launched in 2019 as an extension of the Living Wage Employer accreditation model, and which consisted of the following stipulations:

The scheme will require organisations to pay the Real Living Wage and commit to provide workers with at least four weeks’ notice of shifts, a contract that accurately reflects hours worked, and a contract with a guaranteed minimum of 16 hours a week. Organisations that agree to these measures will be accredited as Living Hours employers alongside their Living Wage accreditation.

(Living Wage Foundation, 2019)

In public remarks when introducing the new scheme and accompanying accreditation network, Chapman argued that the project served as a recognition that pay is not the only factor in effectively tackling in-work poverty within Britain:

The Living Wage has put almost £1bn extra into the pockets of more than 200,000 workers, but it is increasingly clear that pay is not the only driver of in-work poverty. A lack of secure, stable hours is leaving millions of families struggling to keep their heads above water. This isn't good for workers or businesses.

(Chapman, 2019)

In interviews for this thesis, Chapman elaborated on these ideas, stating that “the issues around hours were coming up everywhere, it's been the other big trend in the world of work.” Similarly, the architect and administrator of the project, Martha Crawford, argued that in placing a new emphasis on guaranteed hours as a tool to tackle in-work poverty, the Foundation was returning to the original mission of Citizens UK from 2001:

The actual mission and vision of the Living Wage Foundation is about tackling in-work poverty. And when the first campaign was launched all those years ago, the issues that came up from workers at the time was that pay was key, but so were some of these other issues around hours and working conditions and so on. And in some ways, it felt truer to the mission to think that now we have built up this kind of unique network and power house, for want of a better word, we can now go back to our vision and think "what are some of the other things we can do?"

Crawford, 2019

Both Crawford and Chapman emphasised in interviews for this project that it was the unique nature of the accreditation network that the Living Wage Foundation has built, along with the strong relationships it has cultivated with employers by presenting itself as a partner rather than a sceptical overseer, which allowed it to have the freedom to widen its remit to the larger causes of decent work beyond hourly rates of pay:

It's such a big burning issue, so it felt like with the mission and the kind of organisation that we are, that this is something that we should be facing into. And now we've got this unique way of working and a network, that means that we can do it, where I think that no other organisations that I'm aware of are doing things like this, so it felt like a logical step forward.

Chapman, 2019

Another programme manager, Oliver, argued that:

We've now built this quite unique relationship if you like, between the employers in our network, and the civil society institutions that we engage with, but one that is prepared to have the focus on the things that are on the sharpest end of the world of work. So, pay is obviously a very difficult subject that people don't want to talk about, and other business networks wouldn't tackle those kinds of issues. And if we take that model, and that goodwill and the strength of those relationships that we've built, we can create real change in other areas too.

Oliver, 2019

Another senior member of the Foundation team emphasised that this emphasis on the “sharper” points of the UK labour market, and their willingness to challenge as well as support employers in their actions to either strengthen or weaken these problems, is what makes the Living Wage Foundation a unique actor in the employment relations field. They also emphasised that unlike many other campaigns and accreditation bodies, the sheer breadth of the areas that their work touches upon gives them a wider remit, and thus a larger number of strategies in which they can promote and enforce positive change:

The Living Wage Foundation have to touch on things like procurement and subcontracting and supply chains, it has to touch on HR and that side of things, it has to touch on CSR, and the sort of corporate responsibility and sustainability agenda, and then there's other ways we can get interest through the investor angle and responsible investment, and then you've also got the (and this isn't something that we've majored on because we don't have enough capacity to drive it forward) consumer angle, if you really want to push that as well. So, there's loads of different ways you can get into this, and that's not even withstanding the whole campaigning side of it, or the political arena side as well. And it's touching on so many different parts of business if you like, and it's quite fascinating.

William, 2019

Now that the Foundation has proven its willingness to adapt its approach and focus on the wider causes of in-work poverty beyond hourly rates of pay, it is likely that it will continue to broaden its reach into other areas of the wider decent work agenda in the future. Chapman argues that this is something that all campaigns must do as the landscape within which they operate changes and evolves, stating that “the positive way of looking at it was that all charities and campaigns have to keep moving, and we felt we had to start looking at other things that were in the same model if you like of success that we'd achieved with the Living Wage.” One Foundation programme manager, Joanna, discussed their own predictions that the next evolution from a focus on the decent work agenda would be the creation of a “responsible business agenda,” arguing that:

I think there are a couple of parts to it. One is that it's not just about wages, and we have pivoted on to a decent work agenda. And the other side of that is the responsible business agenda. And the thing that's going to unite the two sides is making responsible business work for employees and employers, and I think that's where we go.

Joanna, 2019

Joanna also cited the ideas and suggestions put forward by Julian Richer, founder (and accredited Living Wage and Hours Employer) of the electronics company Richer Sounds, who has for many years been advocating for a new form of “ethical capitalism,” in which businesses acknowledge a wider share of social responsibility for the welfare of their workers, in line with the ideas posited by the stakeholder theory perspective of capitalism (Freeman, 1984). Richer has argued that he wants businesses:

To explore a different route: one in which the words business and ethics can live comfortably side by side . . . Because there is an ethical way to do business – and businesses should be happy to follow it.

(Richer, 2020).

Joanna put forward her own theory that this was the logical next step in the world of work, and one that her own work on behalf of the Foundation had demonstrated was already beginning to occur:

I'm seeing more organisations really embed what used to typically be a CSR department, in the work that they're doing in general. In terms of "as an organisation we want to show we have values, and we want to live those values rather than it being an add-on to the work that we do already."

Joanna, 2019

She also alluded to the changing norms and parameters of what constitutes “corporate social responsibility” over time, as discussed more in chapter 2 of this thesis:

And some of the big FTSE 100 companies 60 years ago were, their aims of the companies were "do this thing, and look after our people," and it changed quite quickly, thinking like the 1930s Chicago businessmen, to all being about profit, and now I think they're moving back towards a . . . it's about the company and the people, and we've got to recognise that we have a role and a stake in people's lives and the communities we're in as well. And it's becoming more of a key issue for employers.

Joanna, 2019

Regardless of the ways in which the employment relations landscape transforms in the immediate and longer-term future, by establishing the Living Hours scheme alongside their original Living Wage accreditation network, the Living Wage Foundation have shown a willingness to both expand their remit and adapt to changing trends. Wills (2005) has argued that the example of the Citizens UK/Living Wage Foundation campaign for the Living Wage, now in its nineteenth year of existence and as with as high a profile in the media and public eye as it has ever had, demonstrates that “putting political pressure on employers and those in political office *can* succeed”: the future success of the campaign, however, remains to be seen.

8.10. Concluding remarks

This chapter has discussed the development of the Citizens UK campaign for the Living Wage, and provided an understanding of the evolution of the campaign from an activist-based model of publicly shaming employers into paying the Living Wage, and towards a partnership-based model and a professionalisation of the movement through the establishment of the Living Wage Foundation in 2011. It has also explored the inherent tensions and challenges between these two

camps, and the desire of some within the movement to transition to a more balanced relationship in the future.

This chapter has also explored the underlying tensions that the Living Wage movement and Foundation has faced (and continues to face) in its relationship with both established trade union actors, and the state itself. Both have sought to challenge the primacy of the campaign as the pre-eminent actor and arbiter of both how higher wages are fought for and what specifically constitutes a “living wage”, and it is likely that tensions will remain in the Foundation’s relationship with both as the movement continues to develop.

On a more operational level, this chapter has discussed the thinking behind the strategies adopted by the Living Wage Foundation through an exploration of the insights gathered through interviews with Foundation staff for this project, and analysed the impact on their work of the introduction of the National Living Wage in 2015/16. It has also explored the body’s more recent steps into widening their remit into the decent work agenda, most specifically through the Living Hours project, and discussed the likely potential directions the network may progress towards in the future.

It has also explored criticisms of the Foundation’s work derived from interviews for this project with employers and individuals within the wider Living Wage movement and accreditation network, particularly regarding concerns that low-paid workers themselves are increasingly less of an active presence within campaigns seeking to raise their wages, and the tensions that the existence of such campaigns have created with established trade unions within the workplace.

Despite the campaign’s success in their two decades of existence, then, questions and tensions remain about the exact role that the Living Wage Foundation plays within the wider Citizens UK movement: is it a professional regulatory body and corporate social responsibility consultant, partnering with employers to facilitate higher wages on behalf of workers, or is it a bargaining social movement actor, forming alliances with low-paid workers? It remains to be seen how these two conflicting philosophies can be reconciled within the campaign in the future, if indeed they can at all. Perhaps the most central of these tensions is the future role of workers in the struggles for higher wages that the movement embark upon, and whether workers themselves are well represented in bargaining efforts to raise their rates of pay, as the ultimate and final recipients of any and all such struggles.

Chapter 9: Discussion and Conclusions

9.1. Overview of thesis

This thesis has presented a multi-level, multi-actor analysis of the impact of the UK Living Wage campaign on the employment landscape of Britain. The project ranges from a focus on the macro impact of the community-facing Citizens UK campaign and the business-friendly work of the Living Wage Foundation, as an independent actor operating within the industrial relations field; to the meso impact of the decision of organisations to adopt the Living Wage, and the consequences for both their own workplaces and their wider supply chain and procurement networks; to the micro impact of how individual workers being paid a Living Wage process and experience being the recipients of these rates of pay, and the voluntary nature of their employer choosing to adopt them. Drawing on debates from the existing UK Living Wage literature base, particularly around the role of civil regulation in overseeing the actions of employers, as well as the changing role and increasing involvement of civil society organisations in campaigning for higher wages and decent working standards, this thesis makes a significant contribution to advancing understanding and discussion within this field.

This study has identified a series of empirical and theoretical contributions in furthering both understanding of the consequences for the employment landscape of Britain of the UK Living Wage campaign, and in how we conceptualise the role of civil society organisations and third-party actors within the industrial relations research literature. This is of even greater importance at a time of great change within the world of work, as the emergence of the gig economy and the retreating regulatory framework which the state has traditionally enforced have combined to facilitate a greater rise in insecure and precarious forms of work.

This thesis also makes an important theoretical contribution in how we conceptualise and understand what ‘corporate social responsibility’ should be defined as in such a time, as employers face ever-greater pressures to voluntarily raise wages and improve decent working standards to rectify the regulatory gaps in how wages are set and enforced in the UK, alongside the continued failure of the welfare state to help ensure that workers can afford a decent standard of living in Britain today. Following on from the stakeholder theory perspective that forms the theoretical framework of this study, it also provides an empirical example of stakeholder theory

in action, contributing to the literature surrounding both stakeholder theory and the wider literature surrounding the role of businesses in society today.

The empirical chapters of this thesis present an in-depth analysis of four separate aspects of this project's research data, contextualised and reinforced through reference to the existing literature in the field and the wider landscape within which this study takes place. The findings present a multi-dimensional, multi-actor representation of the UK Living Wage movement, and the multiple stakeholders that both comprise it and interact with it in some form. Regarded as a single entity, these findings present a number of empirical and theoretical contributions to the study of the Living Wage in the UK, and the changing nature of the industrial relations landscape as the role of civil society actors becomes ever more influential.

Linking the separate discussions of this project together, the central thesis of this study is that the Living Wage movement presents a primary example of the role that civil society actors can play in affecting significant change across the UK labour market and employment landscape through the facilitation of both grassroots community-based campaigns, and the establishment and enforcement of civil regulatory frameworks in collaboration with a wide variety of other stakeholders, including state actors themselves. Furthermore, through an exploration and understanding of the evolution of the movement over its almost two decades of being in operation, two separate but intertwined developments within the labour market for low-paid workers can also be identified: the proliferation and near-permanent establishment of new insecure and precarious forms for employment for a larger and larger number of workers – and the “decent work” agenda that has arisen in response to these changes, with stakeholders ranging from civil society actors, traditional and newly-emerging grassroots trade unions, state actors, and a host of others working both together and alone in attempting to privately regulate these new forms of financial insecurity for workers across Britain.

9.2. Thesis contributions

The central contributions of this thesis are a multi-level analysis of the impact of the UK Living Wage movement on individual employers and their employees, alongside an in-depth exploration of the emergence and evolution of the movement itself, as an actor promoting the voluntary adoption of higher wage rates and decent working standards across Britain.

Through an empirical exploration of the motivations of employers for their own adoption of the Living Wage, this thesis presents a series of new perspectives in understanding how and why individual organisations choose to make these decisions. These findings make a significant contribution to the existing literature on why organisations make the choice to become accredited Living Wage Employers, filling a particular gap of in-depth, qualitative case study analysis of specific cases within this area, alongside a contribution to the wider corporate social responsibility literature surrounding the voluntary adoption of higher wages and stronger working conditions by employers across the world.

By placing a key focus within this study on examining the firm-level impact of the UK Living Wage, this thesis illustrates the significant organisational change that can occur when an employer makes the decision to become an accredited Living Wage Employer. These insights also demonstrate the wider impact that implementation of the Living Wage can have on independent, non-Living Wage firms across an accrediting firm's supply chain and procurement networks, and within their subcontracted employment relationships with subcontractor firms. This includes the establishment through this process of an inadvertent rise in Living Wage coverage to workers employed by other organisations in some instances, and the removal for accredited Living Wage Employers of one of the key incentives for outsourcing as a strategy in seeking to lessen a firm's wage bill through the lowering of hourly rates of pay.

These findings contribute to the existing debates within the UK Living Wage literature on the internal and external organisational consequences for individual employers of implementing the Living Wage, as well as to the wider supply chain and subcontracted employment literature on the role that primary contractors can have in promoting decent working standards throughout their own networks. On a theoretical level, they also contribute to the literature as an empirical case study example of inter-organisational relationships in action, and the various processes of trust, power, advocacy, and coercion inherent within these relationships.

This thesis also makes an important contribution to the existing gap within the literature on the perspectives of workers themselves towards being paid the Living Wage and how it influences their personal and professional lives, in particular their attitudes towards their employers. These insights have significance not only in contributing to a greater understanding of the impact of the UK Living Wage itself, but also in advancing empirical understanding within the wider literature

concerning the decent work agenda, particularly in analysing what workers themselves consider to be the most important factors in successfully raising their pay and employment standards. The lack of focus on the perspectives and experiences of workers receiving the Living Wage within the existing literature is perhaps the most important gap at present which this thesis makes a significant contribution in filling, with this study opening up new areas of discussion within this area of inquiry to which other scholars can respond to and expand upon through their own work.

Through an in-depth exploration of the development and changing nature of the UK Living Wage movement, this research presents a substantial contribution in furthering understanding of the movement itself, and the campaign's role as an emergent actor within the British industrial relations landscape. In its analysis of the tensions and challenges between Citizens UK and the Living Wage Foundation, as well as between the movement and traditional trade unions, these findings help to further debates within the industrial relations literature on the increasingly important role of civil society organisations in fighting for the interests of low-paid workers, the representation of workers themselves as part of these campaigns and negotiations, and the development and implementation of the decent work agenda across the UK labour market more widely. No literature within the Living Wage field has explored the tensions and challenges that have occurred (and continue to occur) alongside the campaign's evolution through the utilisation of first-hand accounts from within the movement itself before, nor the Foundation's recent transition to reframing itself as a body focused on more than just hourly rates of pay: this study makes a significant contribution to filling these gaps, and opening up new areas of discussion for the wider UK Living Wage literature within the academy.

9.3. Non-academic contributions

Beyond the academic contributions of this thesis detailed above, the arguments and findings discussed throughout this thesis also have a wide number of practical contributions for stakeholders outside of the academy with an interest in the UK Living Wage, and the continued construction of the decent work agenda more widely.

This research also makes a substantial contribution as a practical guide for any employers across Britain considering adopting the Living Wage, and what the experience of that can be for an organisation (along with how such decisions can be made by individual firms). The focus within this thesis on both the internal and external firm-level organisational impacts of accreditation

with the Living Wage Foundation, along with the pitfalls and challenges that other employers have made and the likely impact that receiving Living Wage rates of pay will have on their own employees, makes this study an important resource for any and all interested organisations considering becoming an officially accredited Living Wage Employer.

This thesis also has a series of important findings and insights relevant to the UK Living Wage movement itself, as it continues to reconcile the activism of Citizens UK with the business-friendly nature of the Living Wage Foundation, and seeks to find a better balance between the two. Insights from employers from within the Foundation's accreditation network on their thoughts concerning the movement and the way that the accreditation model operates, discussed in more detail in chapter 8 of this thesis, will also be of relevance to those considering the future of the campaign. Criticisms of the rigidity of the accreditation guidelines, and the feeling of neglect by the movement for some pre-existing Living Wage Employers within the network, may be of particular interest for those within the body considering how to improve the ways and means by which the Foundation operates in the future.

As the Living Wage movement pivots its focus towards the wider decent working agenda, the perspectives of workers on the wider issues surrounding employment at the lower end of the income scale discussed in chapter 7 of this thesis are also an important resource for helping to guide these efforts. The recurring theme within interviews with workers for this study of the importance of a guaranteed number of working hours per week and month, and the setting of these hours at a rate high enough to ensure a sufficient income, reflect well on the Living Wage Foundation's decision to focus on the new "Living Hours" accreditation scheme as their first foray into the wider decent work agenda, with workers identifying a sufficient number of guaranteed hours as just as (if not more than) important as being paid the UK Living Wage in and of itself.

9.4. The role of the state: the emergence of a new civil regulatory framework

As has been discussed and explored throughout this thesis, there is a greater complexity between drawing a clear line between employers and "the state" when it comes to both the legal and the civil regulation of the UK Living Wage. As can be seen through the support given to the movement and accreditation itself by non-Westminster state actors across the entirety of Britain, the dividing lines between the two are easily blurred. Take, for example, the legal ambiguity of

the Welsh Assembly finding intricate ways to promote the Living Wage as part of their own supply chain and procurement network, while also being careful to not explicitly suggest that it is required; or the launch of the Mayor of London's very own form of civil regulation and accreditation network in the Good Work Standard, developed in conjunction with the Living Wage movement and traditional trade unions.

These examples demonstrate that there is a greater role for state actors at different regional and administrative levels within the UK in promoting and facilitating take up of the Living Wage beyond implementing and overseeing a legal regulatory framework, and that despite their roles as arms of the state, they can also play a significant role in the civil regulation of higher wages and better working practices across the employment landscape.

9.5. Understanding the UK Living Wage movement

Through the findings of interviews with Citizens UK and Living Wage Foundation campaigners and staff members discussed in greater detail in chapter 8 of this thesis, it is clear that the Living Wage movement continues to be split between the original focus and ambition of Citizens UK to be a pressure-based civil society organisation, encouraging employers to begin paying the Living Wage through public demonstrations and actions, and the more amicable nature of the Living Wage Foundation's relationship with employers, who act more as a professional human resources advisory body akin to the CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development) or BITC (Business in the Community). The first of these strategies assumes an outsider role for the movement, encouraging employers to do more for their workers primarily through the organisation of workers and activists to hold them publicly accountable for their wage policies: the second adopts a strictly insider approach, acting as an administrative partner for individual employers in facilitating their adoption of the Living Wage, and extolling the strategic business benefits of doing so.

While the ultimate aim of both strategies is focused upon expanding Living Wage accreditation as far and wide across Britain as possible, it is inevitable that given the disparity in both nature and focus of these two approaches, tensions and challenges will arise between them, and the individuals who carry them out. This research details these issues, in particular the concerns among some within Citizens UK that the launch of the Foundation and its advisory-body-approach risks the campaign becoming too friendly with the very same employers that it is

seeking to oversee on a civil regulatory perspective, as well as that such an approach risks the loss of the original focus of the movement. The flip side to this argument, however, has also been raised through interviews for this project: that public demonstrations and increasing attempts to “shame” organisations into raising their wage rates can be as counterproductive as much as it can be successful, and risks undermining the much-discussed reputational benefits of accreditation that the Living Wage Foundation place at the centre of their business case narratives aimed at interested employers. Nevertheless, despite these challenges, the two-pronged wielding of these two approaches in facilitating ethical change within individual employers has often benefited the Living Wage movement, particularly in those cases and those industries where there is little appetite or traction to be gained in publicly shaming an employer into becoming accredited.

To take an example from this project, it is unlikely that a holiday park in the South East of England would have faced much reputational damage from a series of public demonstrations demanding that they pay the Living Wage, given the low-paying nature of the wider sector in general: however, the existence of an official and publicly-facing body like the Living Wage Foundation, with a clear cut message communicated to employers of the business case for becoming accredited, can help to articulate to decision-makers within the firm that there are credible strategic advantages for doing so. At its best then, the Citizens UK branch of the movement can articulate the moral case for the Living Wage, while the Foundation can communicate the business case for doing so: the “carrot and stick approach,” as it was referenced so widely in numerous interviews for this thesis.

9.6. Potential avenues for further research

Given the vast nature of the impact of the UK Living Wage movement, ranging from corporate social responsibility to human resource management to the changing nature of the industrial relations landscapes, the potential avenues for further empirical and theoretical research in this field are plentiful. For example, the existing literature base of the Living Wage itself still retains a particular weakness of evidence in exploring the impacts of accreditation on individual workers, as well as of the wider thoughts of mid-tier employees of accredited organisations on whether their employer voluntarily paying the Living Wage has influenced their own working practices and attitudes towards work at all. The tensions between the Living Wage movement and traditional trade unions, discussed in more detail in chapter 8 of this thesis, would also make

an interesting study, with the perspectives of both the Living Wage movement and trade unions themselves represented in a more in-depth manner than has been possible through this project.

Another obvious extension of this thesis' focus would be an in-depth examination of the impact on both employers and individual workers of the introduction of the Living Hours accreditation scheme, and the impact that it has had on both workplaces and the work-life balance of employees. One other such potential avenue would be to conduct a case study-based project on the experiences of one or more regions, cities, or towns as they work through the steps of becoming part of the "Living Wage Places" scheme, from the development of the initial action plan to final and formal accreditation status. Given the Living Wage movement's extension into the wider decent work agenda, research into the implications of this for the varied stakeholders and actors that comprise the component parts of the wider UK Living Wage ecosystem would also seem an obvious next step.

Slightly afield from the Living Wage, no academic research has yet been conducted on the impact of the recent emergence of decent work standards accreditation models across the UK (for example the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter), discussed in greater detail in chapter 2 of this thesis. A study examining the development of one or more of these standards, and an analysis of the impacts on employers and their workers through voluntary adoption and accreditation with the scheme, could prove a fruitful means of exploring the wider, still-in-development decent work agenda within Britain.

9.7. The emerging landscape

Towards the end of the writing-up period for this thesis, in October 2020, a new political controversy arose in Britain that encapsulates many of the findings and arguments of this thesis. The Manchester United footballer, Marcus Rashford, angered at the refusal of the British government to guarantee free school meals to be extended over the Christmas holidays following the widespread economic damage and rise in poverty across the UK brought on as a result of COVID-19 (Butler, 2020; Romei, 2020), launched a high-profile public campaign to change their mind, following a previous successful campaign for the provision of food vouchers over the 2020 summer holidays (Syal, Stewart and Pidd, 2020). Rashford argued that "this is not politics, this is humanity," and that "these policies are vital to stabilising millions of households across the UK and need to be implemented without delay" (Rashford, 2020). He argued that the

government should rethink their stance, and instead implement a key recommendation of their own recently published National Food Strategy, which called for an expansion of access to free school meals across Britain and the provision of £15 a week food vouchers until Easter 2021 (Topping and Butler, 2020).

When the government declined to do so, individual businesses and local authorities across the United Kingdom voluntarily offered their own assistance in providing free school meals for all children in need across the October 2020 half-term and Christmas holidays, with over a thousand organisations in total joining these efforts (Kids Meals Map, 2020). These organisations ranged from tech companies offering financial assistance, football clubs offering the provision of facilities, to cafes and restaurants offering to cook as many free meals as they can, all cost-free (Topping and Butler, 2020). McDonalds committed to providing 1 million free meals for children, while the supermarket Iceland stated that “support for underprivileged children and their families is of paramount importance to us as a business,” and committed to providing free vegetables to all families in need (Staton, 2020). The communication firm PLMR utilised their own technical expertise to create an interactive map pinpointing those organisations across the UK offering free meals, in order for those families experiencing food insecurity to easily find them (Kids Meals Map, 2020).

In response to these voluntary efforts, Rashford stated that “even at their lowest point, having felt the devastating effects of the pandemic, local businesses have wrapped arms around their communities today, catching vulnerable children as they fell” (Rashford, 2020). A host of local authorities across Britain, controlled by different political parties, also announced their own intentions to provide food vouchers to those families in need across the school holidays, ranging from councils in Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham and London, and even to Hillingdon Council, in the prime minister Boris Johnson’s own constituency of Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Walawalkar, 2020). National authorities in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland also all committed to extending the voucher scheme, leaving England the only nation within the United Kingdom not providing free meals or vouchers to children over the school holidays (Staton, 2020).

While the closing sections of a thesis are an unorthodox place to discuss this state of affairs, these events underline many of the key findings and arguments of this thesis. This includes the

ongoing prevalence of thousands of individual employers making voluntary, ethically-led decisions to commit to combating poverty within the UK, in line with a stakeholder theory perspective that firms have a wider social purpose beyond the solitary pursuit of profit. They demonstrate the wider social responsibilities that both businesses and state actors at different administrative levels have in those areas where national policymakers and the welfare state have failed to provide adequate forms of social protection for the most vulnerable in society, in this case concerning children experiencing food insecurity outside of school term times. Through the response seen to Rashford's campaign, the power of civil society to inspire collective social action and change across the worlds of work and policy, explored in more depth via the actions of Citizens UK and the Living Wage Foundation in this thesis, is also seen anew. And finally, through the uneven geographical coverage of which councils, local authorities, and indeed nations across the United Kingdom have committed to providing a stronger form of assistance to children and families in need, and those that have not, the importance of place in conceptualising and understanding socioeconomic and political issues within Britain in the twenty-first century is underlined.

9.8. Final conclusions

The central purpose of this thesis was to provide an expansive but in-depth examination of the impact of the UK Living Wage campaign since its emergence in 2001, and to do so through an exploration of the campaign staff who conduct and manage it, the organisational decision-makers who take the decision to become affiliated with it, and the workers who ultimately benefit from it. This was accomplished via the utilisation of semi-structured, qualitative interviews across a wide range of organisations and fields, ranging from higher education and construction, to cleaning and hospitality. The goal was to form a comprehensive understanding of the consequences of the campaign's existence through the perspectives of those individuals who facilitate it and interact with it, and to construct wider meaning of the movement's impacts through their own personal experiences and areas of expertise.

To my knowledge, the project is the first within the existing Living Wage literature in its discussion and consideration of Citizens UK and Living Wage Foundation experiences and viewpoints alongside both those of accredited employers, and the workers who are being paid the Living Wage themselves. It is also the first to explore in an in-depth manner the specifics of how

the Living Wage movement operates in Britain today, and of the nature and logistics of the split in the movement between the pressure-based campaigning focus of Citizens UK itself, and the employer-friendly nature of the Living Wage Foundation as an extension of the movement.

The space built into the research fieldwork process to explore unexpected findings as and when they arrived provided the freedom to undertake a greater depth of inquiry into unexpected areas of consequence not fully anticipated during the planning stages of the project, through additional interviews with relevant individuals. This was of particular importance in exploring the wider impacts of the Living Wage which emanated from the decision of individual organisations to become accredited, namely through the stipulation within accreditation guidelines for subcontracted workers to also be paid at Living Wage rates. As discussed more extensively in chapter 4 of this thesis, data collection strategies also benefited from this forward planning when interviews at two organisations came to an abrupt end following their departure from the Living Wage accreditation scheme, a reminder of the dynamic nature and urgency of this field of research.

In concluding this thesis, it seems pertinent to draw focus back to the Living Wage movement itself, and the Living Wage Foundation itself that has been of central interest within this study. The Living Wage movement is a unique actor within the UK, particularly so given its transformation from a social movement-based origin to a professional accreditation body, and all in the span of less than twenty years, in which it has grown from a local campaign in the East End of London targeting individual employers, to a national movement with the ability to influence national government minimum wage legislation. It is unclear whether such momentum and significance can be sustained in the future, particularly so given the largescale changes to the UK labour market and economic landscape still emerging as a result of the onset of COVID-19, but it has proven through its transition from a sole focus on the Living Wage to incorporating aspects of the decent work agenda that it has the potential to adapt to meet them.

In a way, the story of the UK Living Wage is one of two separate stories. One story is of a grassroots-driven, community-focused approach to organising low-paid workers to fight for higher wages for themselves, with the help, support, and resources of an external civil society movement. The other is of a professional accreditation body, structured around the principles of forming supportive partnerships with individual employers, and assisting them in conferring a

Living Wage on their respective workforce as a form of corporate social responsibility. The former story is a bottom-up approach to tackling in-work poverty and worker exploitation in the labour market, while the latter is a top-down process, in which an organisation's management class and an external body take unilateral decisions which are then bestowed upon an employer's workforce. Both stories are equally valid, with neither one or the other being enough on their own to explain how and why each individual organisation decides to become accredited Living Wage Employers: taken together, however, they form a compelling narrative that can help us understand how and why organisations make these decisions, and in the various ways and means by which in-work poverty and insecure work can be tackled most effectively across Britain in the twenty-first century.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Participant information sheet

The Impact of the Living Wage in the UK: Project Summary

Research Summary

This project explores the impact of the Living Wage through an exploration of the reasoning of those employers that choose to become accredited Living Wage Employers, and what they have found the impact on their organisations to be since implementing Living Wage rates. More specifically, the research centres around the following three questions:

1. Why do employers decide to adopt the Living Wage?
2. What are the organisational impacts of implementation of the Living Wage?
3. What impact does adoption of the Living Wage have on low-paid workers?
4. What is the role of the UK Living Wage campaign within a changing employment and industrial relations landscape?

Invitation

The aim is to explore these questions by looking at three accredited Living Wage employers as case studies, and gain insights into the impact that paying Living Wage rates has had on each organisation. This will mainly consist of interviews with those individuals and/or teams involved in the initial consideration and decision-making of adopting the Living Wage (for example board members or heads of departments), along with staff members in a position to see what impact implementation has had since then (for example within human resources or finance teams). In order to help demonstrate the day-to-day impact that the Living Wage has had within these organisations, a number of interviews with workers themselves on their own experiences would also be conducted.

The Study

Ultimately, the overriding objective of this research is to better understand the impact that organisations deciding to pay the Living Wage has on their workplaces and their workers, as well as providing employers considering becoming accredited in the future with a more

comprehensive guide to the typical experiences of implementing the measure. Accredited Living Wage employers stand as recognition of the benefits that can be enjoyed by organisations who promote decent standards of work by paying their workers' wages that enable them to afford a decent standard of living in an era when employment conditions are becoming more precarious, and I feel that it is important that this is recognised as much as possible through a better understanding within academic research of what the typical impacts of the Living Wage can be. By participating in this project your organisation will gain valuable resources of its own to help publicise its efforts in this field, which I would be more than happy to help develop alongside you.

I am hopeful that this research will be of benefit to all of those who are campaigning for the Living Wage, those employers already accredited, and finally those employers considering implementing it, and I would be delighted to share the results of this research with you in any way I can following its publication.

Commitment to Confidentiality and Anonymity

All of the information collected about participants and their insights during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential, so that individuals nor organisations will not be identifiable in the final outputs. Data will also be stored securely, remaining inaccessible to anyone other than myself.

Contact details for further information

Mr Calum Carson, PhD researcher at the University of Leeds (Leeds Business School)

Email Address: ipi5cic@leeds.ac.uk

About the Researcher

I am a PhD researcher who is interested in the impact of the campaign for the Living Wage in the UK, and on the organisational impact of the Living Wage for both the workplaces who adopt it, and the workers who are affected by it.

Thank you for your time

Appendix B: Request to participate email

I, the undersigned, confirm that (please tick box as appropriate):

1.	I have read and understood the information about the project, as provided in the project summary Information Sheet.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and my participation.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	I voluntarily agree to participate in the project.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	I understand I can withdraw at any time without giving reasons, and that I will not be penalised for withdrawing nor will I be questioned on why I have withdrawn.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	The procedures regarding confidentiality have been clearly explained (e.g. use of names, pseudonyms, anonymisation of data, etc.) to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.	If applicable, separate terms of consent for interviews, audio, video or other forms of data collection have been explained and provided to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.	The use of the data in research, publications, sharing and archiving has been explained to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.	I understand that other researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the data, and if they agree to the terms specified in this form.	<input type="checkbox"/>
9.	Select only one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would like my name used and understand what I have said or written as part of this study will be used in reports, publications and other research outputs so that anything I have contributed to this project can be recognised. • I do not want my name used in the final outputs of this project. 	<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
10.	I, along with the Researcher, agree to sign and date this informed consent form.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Participant:

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Researcher:

Name of Researcher

Signature

Date

Appendix C: Tony's Choclonely

Figure 2 Tony's Choclonely Bar



Figure 3 Tony's Choclonely Wrapper

