

# Lewes needs fair pay that can be lived on

## What you can do:

- **Get aware** - take time to find out more about these issues and spend time with those who are affected.
- **Support** - foodbanks (direct, via church or supermarket), volunteer, give supplies/money.
- **Campaign:** talk to employers, unions and others, using the LLW leaflets.
- If you are a Living Wage employer, **sign up** to make this public and help promote to other employers.
- **Help LLW with publicity** - many people are unaware of the real Living Wage.
- **Raise awareness** of poverty in Lewes with councillors and your MP.

Nikki  
(Credit Union)  
*'What we have seen  
over the past few years  
is people's disposable  
income being  
squeezed to  
zero'*

The real  
Living Wage, set  
annually by the Living Wage  
Foundation and based on  
research on what people  
really need to live is now  
(November 2017)  
**£8.75 per hour outside  
London.**

Erika  
(the real Living Wage)  
*'It feels a lot more  
ethical... the company  
cares about you as an  
employee... it shows  
they want you  
to stay.'*

## Contacts:

East Sussex Credit Union  
eastsussexcu.org.uk 0300 303 3188

Citizen's Advice: 0344 4111444

Landport Food Bank: debbietwitchen@gmail.com

Malling Food Bank: john.lamb@abilitymagazine.org.uk

Fitzjohn's Food Bank: helen.chiasson@btinternet.com

241 for Food Banks and Landport Community Cafe:  
facebook.com/241forFoodBanks

Homelink: lewesdistrictchurcheshomelink.org.uk

Churches Together: gretel.scott@btinternet.com

Tenants of Lewes District: told@hotmail.co.uk

Lewes for a Living Wage:  
leweslivingwage.blogspot.co.uk, 01273 470940

# THE LEWES DIVIDE



*Lewes looks like a  
wealthy town but  
there is a sharp divide  
between rich and poor -  
in some areas one in four  
families with children  
live in poverty*

## How would you live on £7.50 an hour?

This is the minimum wage for people over 25.  
And uncertain working hours make budgeting almost impossible.

**Lewes is a high rent area** with few council properties

**Universal Credit** will be introduced in Lewes from June 2018 onwards. It will result in a further squeeze for people on low incomes.

**Debt is rising** and families have little spare cash when work dries up.

Lewes has **three food banks** dealing only with people who are referred by agencies such as Citizen's Advice.

*Government minimum wage is £1,300 a month  
(based on a 40 hour week) and private rents  
£1,100 - would you be able to manage?*

Lewes for a Living Wage (LLW) promotes the real Living Wage, which is based on what people really need to live on.



Living  
Wage  
Lewes

A 40 hour week at £7.50 = £300 per week = £1,300 a month = £15,600 gross p.a.  
The national average wage is £26,000 p.a.

## Hidden poverty

Lewes town may appear affluent, but in two neighbourhoods 25% of families with children are faced with income poverty, defined as below 60% of median income after housing costs. As most areas of the town have much lower levels of poverty, the problem is not always evident.

Some people think that child poverty is caused by parents not wanting to work, but the majority of children in poverty, nationally and here in Lewes, are from low-wage working households.

## Low wages/high rents

### Lewes is a high rent area.

As Lewes town has only 1,086 council properties, costing £420/month for a two bed house/flat, many are forced to resort to private rental costing around £1,100, leaving £200 per month for all other expenses.

For a two bedroom flat the local limit for housing benefit is £836 – £268 less than a typical private rent. People on benefits including those working therefore have a shortfall.

A typical example is a young low-wage family with a severely disabled child, another with special needs, and a baby, trying to exchange their two for a three bedroom flat who are not a top priority on the Council's list. There are many such cases whose needs cannot be met.

Building more social housing and paying a real Living Wage would make life better for families like this.

### Universal credit

How would any of us manage with no money coming in for six weeks?

Universal Credit (UC) is currently being rolled out across the country and is expected to arrive in Lewes, for new claimants, from June 2018. It combines six benefits into a single monthly payment and includes tax credits for those in work. UC was promoted as boosting household incomes, but studies show that many families will be worse off.

UC is paid monthly in arrears, meaning new claimants wait 5-6 weeks for their first payment. There are Advance Payments to help cover the gap, but these must be paid back once UC starts. Many do not have the required bank account.

The Government's own figures show that, in September 2017, around 1 in 5 new

Quote: S.  
(parcel courier)  
*'On £2,000 gross  
(for a 60 hour week)  
... to rent in town is  
£1,100 for a  
two-bedroomed  
house.'*

Under 25 the minimum rates are  
£7.05 (21-25) £5.60 (18-20) and £4.05 (16-17)

claimants were not paid on time (i.e. waited more than six weeks before their first full payment). Delays are often caused by errors or problems with the online claim form, especially when internet access is a problem.

Many low-income families are used to being paid weekly or fortnightly in advance, so a change to monthly payments in arrears is problematic. Evicted families and those on housing benefit are often refused by landlords. There have already been cuts in benefits in recent years: for example the bedroom tax, and reassessments of people with disabilities. UC is leading to increasing debt, rent arrears and evictions.

Citizen's Advice is recommending that the Government should reduce how long people wait for first payment and improve support available.

## Food poverty

Even here in Lewes, residents go without adequate and nutritious food for all sorts of reasons including low/unreliable pay, zero hours contracts, increased cost of living and recent changes which reduce benefit payments.

There are three foodbanks serving the town, based in Landport, Malling and the Wallands Park area (Fitzjohn foodbank). Between them, they help nearly 200 people every week, including families with children.

People are referred to foodbanks not because they have a minor 'cash flow problem' but because they do not have the money to feed themselves and their families.

Managers regularly see people who are struggling to make ends meet because their benefits have suddenly been cut - through Bedroom Tax or Benefit Cap - as well as older people whose Pension Credit doesn't cover the extra service charges for their housing. A surprisingly high proportion of foodbank recipients in Lewes are in work, just not earning enough to 'get by'.

## Debt

Credit unions help people with problem debt as well as being a safe local place for savings. The local East Sussex Credit Union reports that people they deal with are becoming more pressured and tend to have used any reserves so that there is nothing for a crisis. Loan sharks and doorstep lenders are active in Lewes and may charge 300% interest. Universal Credit will make this worse.

People who have concerns about debt or operation of doorstep lenders in their area should contact the Credit Union (overleaf).