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Heathrow Airport accepted paying staff the living wage as a condition of expansion
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The GMB union has welcomed plans by Heathrow to extend the London living wage to airport staff hired through outsourcing agencies.

Cleaners at Heathrow had written to the airport's boss **complaining a deal for a higher rate of pay had been applied only to directly employed staff.**

The deal had been part of conditions to allow Heathrow's expansion.

Heathrow has now accepted the principle of higher pay for all, but says it has yet to work out its implementation.

Cleaners want 'dignity'

Citizens UK, the community activist group which has supported the airport cleaners, welcomed the commitment from Heathrow but said there were "serious and urgent questions about the timeframe".

Last month, cleaners and other agency staff at the airport wrote to Heathrow's chief executive, John Holland-Kaye, saying they were missing out on an agreement to pay the London living wage.

This London living wage is £9.75 per hour - higher than the mandatory National Living Wage of £7.20 per hour for workers aged over 25.



Cleaners wrote to the airport's head to say they had been excluded from the London Living Wage .toote to the airport's head to say they had been excluded from the London living wage

The Airports Commission's report into airport expansion had set the condition that Heathrow should adopt the London living wage.

But this was applied only to directly employed Heathrow staff - and contract workers wrote to Mr Holland-Kaye to say that their lower level of pay denied them "dignity".

The contract staff argued that their pay - which for a 40-hour week could be less than £15,000 per year - was not enough for the cost of accommodation and transport in London.

"This means that some of us have to work several jobs in order to be able to feed our families," said the letter, organised by Citizens UK.

"This puts a lot of pressure on our family life as it means we work very long days and have little time to spend with our children."

Plans next year

A letter this week from Heathrow's chief executive to the union says: "The Davies Commission report contained a condition for Heathrow to 'demonstrate leadership as a community employer by adopting the London living wage'.

"We have accepted this condition as part of the planning consent."

But the letter says the airport will have to work with suppliers to see how it could apply the London living wage to all staff.

"We will announce our more detailed plans to become a London living wage employer when we have completed that work, probably in 2017," says the letter from Heathrow.

GMB representative Perry Phillips says it is a "positive step" the airport has "demonstrated its commitment on becoming a London living wage employer".

But Revd Simon Cuff of West London Citizens said: "There are hundreds if not thousands of workers who need a living wage now and cannot afford to wait. We want to see progress made as soon as possible." A report this week from the Resolution Foundation said that **agency workers were the "forgotten face" in debates about low pay.**

The think tank said there would be a million agency workers in the UK by 2020 - and they were likely to earn less than than directly-employed staff.

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