HARROW
MONITORING GROUP

advocating inclusion so everyone can access - and shape - the services they need
https://harrowmonitoringgroup.uk/about/ contact harrowmonitoringgroupuk@gmail.com

27 September 2026

The Rt Hon John Healey MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
HM Treasury

Dear Chancellor

Essential work should leave enough to live on

I am writing on behalf of Harrow Monitoring Group to ask the Government to examine how the tax system could better support low-paid key and frontline workers in public services. A petition started by a teaching assistant makes a straightforward point: people who support children, patients and other residents every day should be able to meet their own essential costs from what they earn.

There is a clear local reason for Harrow to raise this issue. Trust for London estimates that 19.2% of jobs held by Harrow residents pay below the London Living Wage, compared with 16.1% across London boroughs. Its figures also put Harrow's child poverty rate, measured after housing costs, at 29%. These figures do not tell us how many low-paid residents work in public services, or whether the same households are represented in both measures. They do show why the earnings and living costs of local families warrant attention. Teaching assistants, school support staff, care workers and hospital support staff help sustain services that Harrow residents depend on, yet those on modest wages must meet London housing, travel, food and energy costs from their take-home pay. Trust for London

The national scale of hardship among people who are already working makes this request urgent. In a 2025 survey commissioned by the Living Wage Foundation, 42% of workers paid below the real Living Wage said they had used a food bank in the previous year; among those with dependent children, the figure rose to 56%. Earlier London research found that 51% of low-paid workers had used a food bank in the previous year, including 23% who had visited at least weekly, while 36% had regularly skipped meals for financial reasons. These findings concern low-paid workers generally, rather than public service workers alone, but they show why employment cannot be assumed to protect a household from hardship. www.livingwage.org.uk

We recognise that abolishing income tax for everyone in an essential occupation would raise questions of fairness, cost and where to draw the line. A worker's need for support depends on their income and circumstances as well as their job title. The petition nevertheless raises a question that deserves a considered answer: could targeted tax relief, changes to thresholds or

other measures increase the take-home pay of the lowest-paid public service workers without creating unfair gaps between people on similar incomes?

Any tax measure should be considered alongside adequate pay and the high cost of housing and essentials; it should not become a reason to leave essential roles undervalued. We would welcome a Treasury assessment of the options, their likely benefit to workers, their cost, and their effect on recruitment and retention. We would be grateful to know whether you will consider this issue in forthcoming fiscal decisions and how the Treasury intends to respond to the concern raised by the petition.

Kind regards

Husain Akhtar
Coordinator
Harrow Monitoring Group
[*also, former inspector of school, Ofsted work, and former councillor, London Borough of Harrow*]