IOLLA are a Scottish-born eyewear retailer founded in 2015. Their key focus is to make people look and feel great through delivering high quality eyewear at an upfront, affordable price. Now with three stores across Glasgow and Edinburgh, the IOLLA brand continues to grow - last year the company were even approached to produce Tommy Shelby’s glasses for season 5 of Peaky Blinders!

“At IOLLA, our success isn’t just determined by our products, but also by the happiness of our team.

Stefan, Founder/Director

IOLLA became an accredited Living Wage employer in December 2018 and we spoke with Retail Area Manager, Lucy Jamieson to find out more about their decision to adopt the real Living Wage and why IOLLA felt it was important for the retail sector.

“Retail is more difficult than many people appreciate; being on your feet all day every day, dealing with completely new people and situations, ever changing schedules to meet customer demand with last minute changes to rotas; while we can’t completely change the face of retail, we can change how retail staff are treated and a fair wage is a huge part of that.”

Lucy, Retail Area Manager

While exploring the possibility of implementing the real Living Wage, the team undertook a range of exercises to ensure that paying it would be sustainable. Targets were reviewed for the coming year and mock schedules were built reflecting predicted footfall which allowed for Lucy to calculate predicted wage costs if they were to commit to the real Living Wage.

“A lot of planning went into the decision - we wanted to make sure it was the best decision for the business and something we felt was sustainable.”

Lucy, Retail Area Manager

Once it was clear that implementing the real Living Wage was sustainable for the business, IOLLA decided to pursue accreditation. This led to half their workforce at the time being uplifted to the real Living Wage.

However, Lucy was honest in accepting the challenges some employers may have with costs attached to pursuing and maintaining their Living Wage commitment. She noted that company-wide salary reviews are necessary to ensure that management teams are still being paid fairly when non-management staff begin to receive the real Living Wage, meaning that there is the potential for everyone’s wage to increase.

Whilst paying the Living Wage fits with IOLLA’s values, especially their focus on embracing change, they also wanted to be sure that a move to the real Living Wage was achievable and sustainable for the business long term.
The Benefits

IOLLA have seen benefits in their recruitment for both managerial and part-time positions. Lucy explained that managerial candidates have been very enthusiastic about working for a company that treated its staff so well and were drawn to a Living Wage employer for that reason. Newly recruited part-time staff have also described how they feel they are able to be more flexible around their university timetables without being concerned about losing money. Lucy explained that this boost to recruitment had impacted the company by helping to develop a core team who are keen to stay with the company for a longer period than they originally planned.

"Staff are the biggest and best investment any business can make - being a real Living Wage employer means we can attract great people to join our team who share our values and are proud to work for us."

Lucy, Retail Area Manager

Having previously worked for large national and multinational companies, Lucy feels IOLLA offers a welcome change.

“Paying minimum wage is very common across retail. It’s so refreshing to work in an environment that values the happiness and welfare of staff. The real Living Wage means we pay our staff a fair wage for doing a great job and affords them a better standard of living outside of work.”

Lucy, Retail Area Manager

In retail and similar environments where hours worked need to be increased during busy periods, staffing costs will naturally increase. However, as Lucy told us, this increased cost is offset by having a happier, more motivated team who are on hand to give our customers excellent service and Lucy feels that it’s hard to put a price on something so valuable.

Stefan told us IOLLA’s success isn’t just determined by products but also by the happiness of the team. The culture within the brand is very important and making sure staff feel great about working for IOLLA contributes to the high standard of service and care given to customers. Committing to the real Living Wage has allowed IOLLA to show the value put on team members across all departments.

Izzy, a Showroom Stylist in the West George Street store, joined the IOLLA team in July 2019 and has recently progressed from a part-time role to a full-time. She told us why IOLLA’s accreditation attracted her to the company.

“The fact IOLLA is a Living Wage employer attracted me further to working for a company I already loved. It has helped me live comfortably, working the same hours I have in the past when just scraping by. As an employee, earning the living wage makes me feel valued and motivated to work to the best of my abilities.”

Izzy, Showroom Stylist
When we spoke to Roisin, who works as a Showroom Stylist in Edinburgh, she explained how it was a refreshing change to work in such an open and positive environment. Promoting happiness is another of IOLLA’s company values and Roisin highlighted how she enjoys being part of a company who live up to their values and show they care about the staff they employ.

“The living wage is a welcome change to my life. Each year rent and utilities bills increase so the real Living Wage helps normal people like me to get by especially living in Edinburgh where housing is costly. IOLLA is a small independent company and if they can choose to give their employees this wage, I believe bigger companies should be doing the same. It just shows that IOLLA genuinely care about the people who work for them and hopefully other companies will follow their example.”

Roisin, Showroom Stylist

Stefan hopes IOLLA’s can inspire others in the traditionally low paid retail sector to follow their example and consider taking steps towards Living Wage accreditation.

“Our commitment has helped make an impact on the lives of people who live in our economy and community. We hope that by IOLLA making this commitment we can lead the way for other retailers to do the same, so we can all collectively live happier, more fulfilling lives.”

Stefan, Founder/Director

Join IOLLA and the real Living Wage movement today

The real Living Wage makes a real and immediate difference to the lives of workers and at the same time, has proven social and business benefits. Living Wage accreditation is widely recognised as a mark of a responsible employer. The accreditation process is straightforward and there is a team of trained accreditation officers who can provide support and guidance. The real Living Wage is calculated annually according to the real cost of living in the UK and London.

Get in touch

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An initiative from the Poverty Alliance, in partnership with the Living Wage Foundation, funded by the Scottish Government.