

Business in the Parliament Conference 2025

Fair work and the Future Workforce Panel Session Hosted by Social Enterprise Scotland & Business in the Community Scotland

Overview

The Scottish Government has an ambition for Scotland to be “a leading Fair Work Nation by 2025”. In its [Fair Work Action Plan](#), the Scottish Government sets out a vision:

“where fair work drives success, wellbeing and prosperity for individuals, businesses, organisations, and society. This means better Fair Work outcomes for all, as well as specific improvements in the experience of work and the workplace for women, disabled people, and people from racialised minorities.”

To help achieve this, the Fair Work Convention was established in 2015 as an independent advisory body that advocates and promotes fair work across Scotland. The Convention developed a [Fair Work Framework](#) that allows us to track progress towards creating a ‘Fair Work Nation’ in Scotland. The Framework is spread across the five dimensions of fair work that the Convention developed.

Effective voice

For individuals, the opportunity to have an effective voice is crucially important. Having a say at work is consistent with the broader suite of rights available to citizens in democratic societies.

Security

Security of income can contribute to greater individual and family stability and promote more effective financial planning, including investment in pensions.

Respect

Respect at work enhances individual health, safety and wellbeing. Dignified treatment can protect workers from workplace-related illness and injury and create an environment free from bullying and harassment.

Opportunity

It is a reasonable aspiration to want work that is fair – and for fair work to be available to everyone. Fair opportunity allows people to access work and employment and is a crucial dimension of fair work.

Fulfilment

Security of income can contribute to greater individual and family stability and promote more effective financial planning, including investment in pensions.”

Some important context is that the UK Government is bringing forward an Employment Rights Bill, which aims to ban exploitative employment practices and strengthen employment rights.

The Purpose of this Panel Session:

- Raise awareness of the definition and key principles of Fair Work.

- Evidence some of the practical benefits to employers, the bottom line, productivity and employee engagement.
- Highlight current policy action by The Scottish Government and the Fair Work Convention.
- Share experiences about practical, real-world implementation in private and public sector workplaces.
- Examine some of the practical challenges and barriers for employers.

Suggested Discussion Questions, Challenges and Opportunities

- In what ways can businesses directly benefit from adopting Fair Work practices?
- What are the specific opportunities and challenges for both SMEs and big businesses?
- What about direct, up-front costs compared to longer-term benefits of staff retention, profits and productivity?
- Which sectors are driving Fair Work and where are the gaps?
- What are the current government policy actions, both now and future plans?
- What could government and others do to help employers achieve Fair Work in practice?

About Social Enterprise Scotland and Business in the Community Scotland

[Social Enterprise Scotland \(SES\)](#) describes itself as:

“an independent, membership-led organisation and is the voice of social enterprise in Scotland. We have championed the sector for more than 15 years to help create a supportive policy environment for social enterprises. We are the first point of contact for the media and public and promote a positive vision for social enterprise.”

[Business in the Community \(BITC\)](#) describes itself as:

“a UK-wide charity who convene the network of leaders committed to changing their business and leveraging the power of working together to deliver positive economic, social and environmental change. In Scotland we work hand in hand with our [Scotland Leadership Board business members](#) to drive impact across the country.”

Where can I find more information about fair work?

- The [PrOPEL Hub](#) is a new initiative designed to help boost productivity and wellbeing through supporting the growth of better workplaces in the UK.
- [This project](#) within the PrOPEL Hub explores how workplace and job design practices shape employees' wellbeing and involvement in innovation, and how insights on these issues can help address the UK's 'productivity puzzle'.
- [“Can Good Work Solve the Productivity Puzzle”](#) is a report published by Carnegie UK and The RSA (2020) that indicates that *higher quality work, like higher pay, can serve as a spur to greater work satisfaction and motivation, thus leading to higher levels of workplace productivity. Also that More productive, higher-performing firms are more likely to invest in enhanced worker security, opportunity, training and engagement.*
- Global research indicates that companies with more diverse executive teams were more likely to outperform the least diverse companies in terms of profitability - [The Living Wage is good for business | Living Wage Foundation](#)
- Evidence shows that training improves employee productivity, supporting business performance - [Training in Enterprises: New Evidence from 100 Case Studies | READ online \(oecd-ilibrary.org\)](#)

- Recent studies indicate that while over 80% of Scottish workers work flexibly or want to, only around 3 in 10 Scottish job adverts offer flexibility - [The Timewise Scottish Flexible Jobs Index 2022](#)
- [This Fair Work Convention report](#) explores some potential policy levers at the disposal of the Scottish Government that could enhance fair work in Scotland.