



Working to become better employers

The aim of the Community Sector Employers' Forum is to help employers to provide the best quality employment possible. In this paper we set out our vision of what is a 'good employer' and how can community sector employers work together to achieve these standards. This includes:

- how employers can make progress as individual organisations
- where collective action will be needed to tackle the constraints facing community sector employers

We see this paper as defining common ground between the members of the Forum which will underpin our future work.

Good employer: *A good employer is one who meets the requirements of employment law and who seeks to provide a positive, supportive, safe work environment which enables the organisation to maximise the achievement of its goals while enabling employees to develop to their full potential.*

What Makes a Good Employer?

We set out standards below on HR practices, pay and conditions which will ensure employers are complying with employment legislation and with good practice. In addition to policies, employers need procedures to implement these standards in the workplace.

a) Policies

Minimally employers should have policies on

- Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures, including Bullying and Harassment
- Recruitment & Selection
- Equality
- Health & Safety
- Leave entitlements
- Hours and Breaks

Ideally employers should have policies on

- Employee Appraisals
- Work-Life Balance
- Managing Diversity
- training/career development/wider experience
- confidentiality and data protection

b) Pay

Employers should aim to use scales which reward employees for the work they are doing in line with pay for similar work in the public sector; and seek to ensure that annual increases/national pay agreements are paid

c) Conditions

In addition to meeting obligations under the various leave entitlement legislation, employers should endeavour to provide

- Pension contribution



- Enhanced sick pay scheme
- Annual increments as agreed under national agreements
- Opportunities for flexible working
- Training/career development opportunities

d) Managing people: implementing policies

Employers should have communication and training plans to ensure that employees:

- know the organisations' key policies and the implication for them in terms of both their rights and responsibilities
- know what is expected of them in terms of their performance and how this will be managed and monitored both during probation and after
- are clear on what steps they can take if they feel they are being treated unfairly

Ideally, employers should have a long term approach to managing and developing their staff.

e) Trade Union Membership

Employers should recognise employees' right to join a Trade Union and be prepared to recognise a union which represents a significant number of employees, and to engage constructively with the union in a spirit of partnership.

Making Progress

a) Implementing Policies

All employers can adopt the minimal list of policies set out in section C above in the short term while incurring little if any cost. Templates for most of these policies can be found on the Employer Resource Bureau for the Community Sector (www.csef.ie). These can be downloaded and adapted to the needs of your organisation. In relation to the other policies listed above, the website contains an outline of what such policies should contain. Updates on relevant developments in case law, good practice guidance etc. are sent periodically to all those who log in and register with the site.

b) Overcoming the barriers to achieving adequate funding for pay and conditions

Employers face particular constraints in trying to improve employee pay and conditions (other than flexible working). As a result organisations often experience recruitment and retention problems. An important role for the Forum will be facilitating employers to agree joint positions on common pay and conditions issues and make representations to government to ensure these are factored into funding programmes. The Forum recognises that Trade Unions representing employees in the sector are also seeking to gain improved pay and conditions.

A strong collective voice

To achieve improvements in pay and conditions, we need a strong collective voice, a voice which must be underpinned by shared understanding of what we are trying to achieve. This paper is a step towards achieving this voice.