

Code of Practice for Ethical Employment launched

At the centre of the Code is a focus on guaranteeing good employment practices for the millions of employees involved in public sector supply chains.

All public sector organisations in Wales, businesses and third sector organisations in receipt of Welsh public sector funding will be expected to sign up to the code. Other organisations and businesses based in Wales are encouraged to sign up to the code.

The new code covers six key subjects, containing 12 commitments, ranging from unlawful and unethical practices to good and best practice. It has been developed with the support of the Workforce Partnership Council and social partners including Unions.

The first subject is Modern Slavery, estimated to affect fifty million people worldwide including in the UK and Wales. The Code of Practice, and accompanying guidance, will enable staff to spot and deal with allegations and to identify and assess spend areas at higher risk of modern slavery and human right abuses.

The second area in the Code is Blacklisting, when workers are discriminated against if they join a Union or raise Health and Safety concerns. The Code of Practice, and accompanying guidance, contains a commitment to ensure suppliers are not using blacklists and sets out how to avoid companies that have not taken the issue seriously.

The next three areas relate to terms and conditions of employment, including Zero hours contracts, Umbrella Schemes and False Self-Employment. The Code of Practice, and accompanying guidance, will help staff to differentiate between fair and unfair practices. The Guide also includes a Fair Work Practices tender question to deal with these issues through procurement.

The final area relates to the Living Wage and contains a commitment to consider paying all staff a Living Wage as a minimum.

In signing up to the Code, organisations will agree to comply with the 12 commitments designed to eliminate modern slavery and support ethical employment practices.

Mark Drakeford said:

“I am very pleased to be launching our Ethical Code in Supply Chains at the Workforce Partnership Council today. This is a ground-breaking piece of work – and an excellent example of what working in social partnership across Wales can deliver.

"The Welsh public sector spends around £6bn every year on goods, services and works involving international supply chains. The uniting factor is the people involved in each stage of these supply chains.

"It is therefore vital that good employment practices are at centre of all public sector projects here in Wales. This new code will play an important role in helping achieve this and in turn tackle unfair employment practices and contribute to improved conditions for workers.

"I expect all public sector bodies in Wales, Welsh businesses and suppliers to the Welsh public sector to sign up to this code. It is only by working together that we can help deliver a better, and crucially, a fairer deal for workers in our supply chains in Wales and throughout the world."

Martin Mansfield, Wales TUC General Secretary said:

"This new code of practice is a very welcome step on the way to ensuring that Wales becomes a 'fair work nation'.

"Welsh government has a strong commitment to address exploitative and unethical employment practices and is taking action to enforce that. The Wales TUC wants to see all the powers and influence available to government used to ensure people are treated fairly at work.

"Wales has many great employers who provide career opportunities and development for staff and work in partnership with unions. However there are still too many bad bosses who seek to exploit workers and undermine decent standards in order to enrich themselves.

"This code is an indication that Wales will not tolerate exploitation. Now we need similar action to ensure decent work and fair treatment are the only way in Wales."

Alison Ward, Chief Executive, Torfaen County Borough Council said:

"Public sector employers in Wales are strongly committed to the wellbeing of all those who deliver services to the public, whether they are employed directly or through contractual arrangements. We welcome the principles set out in the Code of Practice in Ethical Employment in the Supply Chain, and we hope to see it ensure fair treatment for everyone involved in the demanding job of providing good public services in times of austerity."