

# **Scottish Parliament Social Justice & Social Security Committee**

## **Inquiry into Addressing Child Poverty through Parental Employment**

### **Written submission by the Wheatley Group (21 June 2023)**

#### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of our key family friendly policies and support offers for staff.

#### **2. Policies**

- 2.1 The key family friendly policies are:

- Family Friendly Policy
- Maternity Policy
- Shared Parental Leave Policy
- Policy on Hours of Work, Overtime Related Allowances & Flexible Working
- Time off and Special Leave Policy

- 2.2 Wheatley Group appreciates that the workforce within the UK is changing and becoming increasingly diverse with a high percentage of parents and individuals with caring responsibilities, and other individuals who, at some stage in their career / life, may require support or to take time off for a number of reasons.

- 2.3 Wheatley Group understand that it can be sometimes difficult to combine work duties and family responsibilities. In recognition of this, Wheatley Group is committed to ensuring a fair work-life balance for all staff, in order to enable them to care for their children, and to care for certain adults.

#### **3. Employment Legislation**

- 3.1 All Wheatley Group Family Friendly Policies are compliant with employment legislation and covers:

- Maternity Leave and Pay
- Parental Leave
- Shared Parental Leave and Pay
- Paternity Leave and Pay
- Adoption Leave and Pay
- Fostering

- Time off for Dependants
- Carers Leave
- Surrogacy
- Fertility Treatment Leave
- Flexible Working
- Childcare Support

3.2 Many of our provisions are enhanced and pay is above the statutory limits provided in employment legislation.

#### **4. Recent Changes to Family Friendly Policies**

4.1 As part of our EDI (Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion) Different Together Campaign and in recognition of Carers Week (5-11 June 2023), Wheatley Group launched our Carers Passport at a Carers Network lunch and learn. This event celebrated carers in the workplace, reminding our colleagues of the support available for staff who are carers outside of work. This event included advice from welfare benefits, how power of attorney can help, and calming therapies were on offer as a wellbeing boost.

4.2 To support carers in the workplace Wheatley Group have enhanced carers paid leave to 6-days (pro-rata) per annum for all staff with caring responsibilities which is above the CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development) recommendation of 5 paid days leave per annum.

#### **5. Childcare Support**

5.1 The childcare voucher scheme is closed for new applicants due to government changes which currently limits the childcare support Wheatley Group can offer our staff members. The scheme only remains in use for existing employees using the scheme. Staff are signposted to the government checker for what they could be eligible to receive.

5.2 When Wheatley Group launched their W.E Benefit scheme in 2013 they introduced additional childcare support to staff members who are registered with a childcare voucher provider and in receipt of childcare vouchers. Eligible staff members receive £400 of vouchers twice a year.

#### **6. Flexible Working**

6.1 Wheatley Group offer a number of flexible working arrangements, together with other provisions set out above, committed to the right balance between work and life commitments. These arrangements focus on improving healthy lives and making more opportunities available to staff, to suit their domestic commitments. These include (and are non-exhaustive):

- Part-time working

- Compressed hours
- Job-sharing
- Shift-arrangements
- Term-time
- Homeworking

6.2 Prior to the coronavirus pandemic, working from home was on the increase and Wheatley Group identified the benefits that it can bring to the business and the improved work-life balance for their staff. Following the pandemic Wheatley Group moved to a new operating model and 45% of staff are now Agile Home Based Workers.

6.3 It is clear that there are a number of benefits from flexible working, such as:

- Flexibility and agility in working arrangements
- Improved employee retention
- Attract new talent
- Increased productivity
- Increased staff motivation
- Improved staff health and wellbeing
- Financial benefits for staff

## **7. Other Offers / Benefits for Staff**

7.1 Wheatley Group provide their staff with other support mechanisms to assist working parents and help staff retention and recruitment. These cover:

- Our employee assistance provider PAM-Assist
- Our bespoke counselling service
- Advice from Welfare Benefits experts to help maximise staff incomes to relieve financial pressures
- Advice on Power of Attorney
- Wellbeing Initiatives and Support
- Health Plan
- WE Benefit which gives all Wheatley Group staff discounts and deals with a huge range of retailers helping staff save money on everyday essentials
- Carers Passport
- Carers Scotland webinars via My Academy
- Additional Childcare Support
- Travel Loans and help with travel costs
- Access to education and training
- Apprenticeship schemes
- Supporting people to move into work – such as, Environmental Roots and Changing Lives Programmes
- Further Education (bursaries)
- Subsidised driving lessons

- Cycle to Work
- Professional Membership Fees
- Credit Union
- **Attractive and competitive salaries**
- **Commitment to the living wage**