

Business in Parliament Conference (BIPC) 2025

Panel 4 Note: *Fair Work and the Future Workforce*

Chair:

Anna Fowlie - CEO, Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations

Co-Hosts:

Louisa Macdonell (Business in the Community)

Duncan Thorp (Social Enterprise Scotland)

Minister:

Tom Arthur MSP – Minister for Employment and Investment

Summary

The chair welcomed attendees and highlighted the need to promote fair work practices in all sectors and the benefits they bring to both employers and employees.

Anna introduced and led the discussion, inviting panel members for their views on fair work and the impact on workforces. Insights shared by participants included:

- Positive results in terms of project delivery are achieved when employees are equipped with an effective voice, security and fulfilment.
- Practical steps businesses have taken in respect to fair work include promoting staff-led and delivered initiatives in addition to obtaining accreditation such as the 'Investors in People' that help attract and retain talent.
- Raising awareness of the rights of employees, through helping them understand essentials such as payslips and employment rights, for example, can prevent exploitation.
- Fair Work is for all - the public sector leadership can foster private sector commitment so fair work practices become the norm.
- Cost pressures can be a barrier to rollout of Fair Work initiatives, but the investment will future-proof businesses in the long term.
- Leadership and support exercised by responsible businesses within their supply chains play a critical role in advancing and disseminating fair work practices.

Attendees were broadly in agreement on the value of showcasing in proving that fair work practices deliver value for businesses. While more needs to be done, Scotland is taking a proactive approach. Some highlighted barriers in uptake of Fair Work policies, such as management uncertainty around how to support disabled colleagues.

In closing, Colin Smyth MSP reflected on the importance of engagement with business and the need to do more to promote Fair Work. The Minister for Employment and Investment reiterated the importance Fair Work has for the Scottish Government and the measures it has taken since 2015.

Outcome

The Minister agreed on the need for closer, continuous engagement with the UK Government on upcoming legislation as well as the benefits of showcasing examples of businesses that adopt fair work practices.