

Good Work Is?

Views from the Leeds City Region

This contribution is based on the collective work of a group of Local Authorities and the Combined Authority in the Leeds City Region and our regional partners.

In headline terms, we agree with the short definition the RSA have tweeted: *'fair and decent with scope for fulfilment and development.'*

We are currently working to embed inclusive growth in policy and projects across our city-region. We suggest 'good work' goes hand-in-hand with inclusive growth.

We recognised that for us to drive good work as the principal route to tackling poor health, poverty and inequality we must first 'put our own house in order'. As major local institutions, we have a critical role to play in bringing leadership to this agenda and in making the case for good jobs that deliver good outcomes for the lives of so many people across all of our communities. Local Authorities and the Combined Authority are leading by example and have adopted a Low Pay Charter that commits to:

- Recognising financial constraints, we are working to boost levels of take home pay now and through to retirement. We have reviewed existing pension information to make the case for membership from a low pay perspective and proactively target its communication at lower paid workers to drive up-take. We are working with partners including the Credit Union to deliver financial education to staff;
- We are supporting our staff to make their money go further, improve their quality of life, and have the tools they need to develop and, in time, progress to better and higher paid work;
- We have committed to proactively communicating the positive relationship between skills and opportunity; and to ensuring that lower paid staff are supported to reach their potential through implementation of a strategy for inclusive personal and professional development;
- We are proofing all HR policies for their impact on lower paid workers, agreeing that low pay is a protected characteristic in our Authorities, with particular focus on progression and reduction of institutional barriers such as constrained career structures. We are examining how we use skills and positive employment practices to assist progression, improve job quality and wellbeing and boost organisational performance;
- We are committed to delivering excellent management and leadership practices as standard across our organisations, with specific focus on equipping those who manage lower paid workers with the skills and systems they need. We are recognising positive results and effort, with simple and fair systems for measuring and appraising performance, identifying personal and professional development needs and promoting progression;
- We engage consistently, frequently and appropriately to ensure our action remains relevant to peoples' circumstances and needs, in particular reviewing access to information;
- We are investing in and promoting a responsive employee benefits package that is accessible and communicated to target groups consistently, frequently and through the right channels, and that complements the approach in individual Districts to directly support lower paid workers to stretch their take-home pay. Wherever possible, we will use our collective leverage to broker deals with providers. We listen to our lower paid staff and continually evolve our offer accordingly;

- We are collaborating across the WYCA area to streamline health and wellbeing activities, learn from good practice and target lower paid workers to increase participation;
- We are guarding against inappropriate use of zero hours contracts and protecting casual workers from affects of low pay. We have banned the use of exclusivity clauses and 'false agencies' that bypass Agency Workers Regulations.

Whilst the work on our Low Pay Charter inevitably focusses on our lowest paid staff, we would argue that those people receiving low pay are often those who suffer from the worst excesses of 'bad work'. Thus, our commitment to creating good work for those most likely to be in poverty or just about managing, embraces our ambition for all our staff, partners and residents to have good work.

It is good jobs that matter - where people feel a sense of stability, have a say in the workplace, know that their effort is recognised and rewarded, have the skills to do the job but also to develop their own potential, and trust that they will be treated fairly. And most critically, that they are paid a decent wage for the work that they do.

Creating an atmosphere in which everyone understands how they make a difference and contribute to success and have the opportunity to voice their opinion and shape their work engenders pride, trust, empowerment, teamwork, values and wellbeing – all vital in good work.

We believe that minimum standards for travel time, Terms and Conditions, annual leave, skills and progression drive up standards and contribute to good work.

Ensuring adequate security of work, benefit supplements, sick-pay and pensions, flexible working and flexible leave promotes wellbeing and productivity – this is even more important in the grey areas of a gig-economy

Work is a social activity and good relationships are vital, allowing us to respect differences and value diversity.

Finally, we are building a narrative on Inclusive Growth in the Leeds City Region that bridges prosperity and fairness and that builds resilience delivered by a partnership of private, public and third sector agencies.

We believe that Inclusive Growth is broad based growth that enables the widest range of people and places to both contribute to and benefit from economic success. Its purpose is to achieve prosperity alongside greater equity in opportunities and outcomes.

In Leeds City Region only by integrating economic and social policy will we achieve Inclusive Growth. Our approach addresses poverty, social exclusion and inequality in harmony with economic interventions that jointly achieve the best outcomes and opportunities for our citizens.

Inclusive growth is about living standards and earnings, in-work progression, procurement and productivity and 'Good Work'. An Inclusive Growth approach takes a long term perspective and the focus is on productive employment rather than merely direct income redistribution as a means of increasing income for excluded groups.

We hope that this is helpful

Director, Inclusive Growth