

Progressive Workplace Policies in Scotland

Introduction

Last February the Scottish Government commissioned an independent review of progressive workplace policies and practices in the public and private sectors in Scotland. It was Chaired by Jim Mather and had a broad based membership from employers, trade unions (including UNISON's Lilian Macer) and academics. The aim was to identify best practice to promote collective bargaining and innovation in the workplace. The Review Group has published its report and this briefing highlights the key points.

Industrial Relations in Scotland

The report dispels many of the myths about relations between unions and employers, highlighting the positive relationships that rarely get media coverage. Scotland does of course benefit from significantly higher union density than the rest of the UK, but this report goes further in setting out the range and depth of industrial relations practice. This is helpfully illustrated with case studies and examples from a range of sectors.

Themes

The Review Group has identified four key themes for action. They are:

- investing in the capacity of union members and staff - and enhancing employer capacity in the same way - to deliver economic, social and civic benefits;
- investing in dialogue and communication about fair work to achieve a broader and deeper recognition of the benefits that accrue from unions and employers working together, and a shared commitment to progressive workplace policies;
- fostering real opportunities for unions, employees and employers to work together which embeds these values more systematically and maximises the benefits of shared knowledge and distributed leadership;
- a willingness to resource, evidence, share and learn from what works.

Recommendations

The Review Group has made 30 recommendations to reflect the themes above and these include:

Capacity Building

- Continued support for Scottish Union Learning. Training for union representatives provided through further education colleges should be funded through a fee remission arrangement.
- Introduce trade union Equality Representatives into Scottish public sector workplaces, with access to training and facility time.

KEY POINTS:

- **Working Together Review sets out a new framework for Industrial relations in Scotland.**
- **Includes building union capacity through training and new equality and green reps**
- **Govt to promote fair employment practice**
- **New national structures to promote dialogue and best practice**
- **Worker Directors on all public bodies.**



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- Introduce Environmental (green) Representatives into Scottish public sector workplaces, with access to training and facility time. Together with an environmental workplace fund to develop union capacity in this field.
- Develop a Union Leadership Development Programme to enhance the capacity of current and future union leaders.

Supporting Fair Employment

- The Scottish Government to emphasise the significance of Scotland's trade union movement, the valuable part which unions can play in building economic success, and the value of union facility time in delivering effective industrial relations. With a single minister at Cabinet level.
- Expanding the 'social dialogue' approach encompassed in the Memorandum of Understanding with the STUC to involve employers in Scotland,
- Explore how the NHS Scotland model of partnership working might translate across to other sectors.
- Expand the reach of the Determined To Succeed / Better Way To Work - Unions into Schools and Colleges initiative.

Constructive Union and Employer Leadership

- The Scottish Government should establish a stakeholder body with representation from trade unions and private/public/third sector employers to provide leadership and dialogue on Scottish industrial relations matters and fair work.
- This body should promote best practice, develop joint training, extend collective and sectoral bargaining and increase levels of workplace democracy.
- The Scottish Government and Scotland's Public Sector should use powers of procurement to encourage progressive industrial relations practices and behaviours in the private and third sectors.
- All Industry Leadership Groups and public sector bodies should be required to establish fit-for-purpose vehicles to formally engage with unions on employment, workplace and workforce development matters.
- All public sector bodies should be required to include a section in their annual report on their approach to industrial relations and the impact that has had on workplace and workforce matters.
- Legislation to ensure that there is effective worker representation (from representative trade unions) on the board of every public sector body with status equivalent to a non-executive director.
- Develop a strategy to increase the number of board members on public bodies from a trade union background with due regard to diversity and rebalancing female participation.

Evidence-based Approach to Constructive Industrial Relations

- An Industrial Relations Modernisation Fund to encourage unions and employers to develop innovative approaches to industrial relations in Scotland, together with an Industrial Relations Learning Academy.
- Improve the availability, quality and accessibility of representative Scottish data on industrial relations and build greater research capacity in the field of industrial relations.

Scottish Government response

The Government has welcomed the review as a "well-evidenced and insightful report on the sorts of progressive labour market policies and practices which are likely to enhance business productivity through more effective engagement between employers and employees". They have committed to working up a joint response with trade unions and business.

Further information

Working Together Review Group report

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2014/08/4647>

UNISON Scotland evidence to the review

http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/response/ProgressiveWorkplacePoliciesInScotland_ResponseToScotGovtWorkingTogetherReview_Jun2014.pdf



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