

Fair work for health, well-being and equity: Public Health Wales engagement phase

Summary

Why fair work and health, well-being and equity?

Work and working conditions are critical determinants of health, well-being and health equity, and a healthy engaged workforce contributes to business productivity and societal prosperity. Fair work is where workers are fairly rewarded, heard and represented, secure and able to progress in a healthy, inclusive environment where rights are respected

Ensuring those experiencing disadvantage have access to fair work remains an essential way of improving long term health and well-being of individuals and households, including for children. Participation in fair work provides a sense of purpose and means that people have money and resources for a healthy life for them and their families. This reduces psychological stress, creates a stepping stone out of poverty and helps children have the best start in life. Fair work can contribute to an economy of well-being, improving outcomes for the whole population, including those most disadvantaged.

What did we do?

In 2021 we established an expert panel to support the development of recommendations for local and regional partners to increase participation in fair work to improve health, well-being and equity. We launched a range of materials in May 2022 identifying six areas for action through which local agencies can improve participation in fair work to develop health, well-being and equity.

Between the summer of 2022 and summer 2023 the Wider Determinants of Health Unit in Public Health Wales engaged stakeholders to help them to:

- Support them to connect fair work and health, well-being and equity and understand what action they can take.
- Influence the future work of the unit by understanding stakeholder priorities, mechanisms, challenges, any learning and their current needs.

What did we find out?

Review of Public Service Board, Regional Economic Frameworks and Regional Skills Partnership plans

Our review of Regional Economic Frameworks found that there are commitments and actions across the four frameworks to improve and increase participation in fair work in relation to the real living wage and improving access to and creation of sustainable jobs. Half of the Regional Skills Partnership Employability plans reference fair work.

There has been an increase in the number of Public Service Board well-being plans referencing action on working conditions or employment. Fair work characteristics considered are mostly in relation to opportunity for access, growth and progression through activities such as on volunteering, training, upskilling, education and apprenticeships.



Increase in the proportion of PSB well-being plans referencing employment and/or fair work characteristics

37% → **85%**

Stakeholder Insights

Stakeholders recognised that under devolved Welsh Government powers the landscape is supportive and activities more achievable to increase participation in fair work within the public than private sector in Wales.

Social Public Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill aims to improve public services through “social partnership working, promoting fair work and socially responsible public procurement” further strengthening public sector bodies in their social partnerships and procurement duties in relation to fair work.

Local Public Health teams recognised the opportunity to influence strategic planning cycles within Health Boards and with other partners as well as advancing work in relation to real living wage, access to training education and apprenticeships and procurement processes. Some stakeholders felt that further engagement and influencing activity should be undertaken within the private sector.

What are the challenges and barriers for local and regional agencies in relation to fair work?

Lack of local and regional data collection and monitoring of fair work



Focus on economic growth and development



Impact of economic downturn



Challenges with recruitment and retention



Service delivery pressures



Funding and budgets pressures



Conclusion

Our engagement with national, local and regional partners has been a route to influence action to increase participation in fair work and develop relationships with key stakeholders. Most effort in increasing participation in fair work seems to be in relation to the real living wage, procurement and increasing opportunities for access growth and progression. As regions develop their approaches, plans and activities it would be of value to further consider other characteristics of fair work.

Stakeholders should ensure that actions to increase participation in fair work are embedded in future policies and plans. The Social Partnership and Public Procurement Bill provides an opportunity for public sector bodies to consider social partnerships and procurement duties in relation to fair work.

There is a gap in how the data can support the concepts of fair work and how progress could be measured, including data collection, evaluation and monitoring of fair work characteristics along with further research on the extent of fair work in Wales.

