



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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Workforce Partnership Council: Partnership and Managing Change (2012)



Partnership and Managing Change is an Agreement of the Workforce Partnership Council and will be annually reviewed by the Council to ensure it is up-to-date, remains fit for purpose and is operating effectively.

It is an Agreement regarding the process by which the social partners (employers and trades unions) work in partnership to manage change as a fundamental part of how we improve the delivery of public services in Wales.

It captures the ethos of the Welsh Government's *Working Together for Wales – A Strategic Framework for the Public Service Workforce in Wales*, agreed by Cabinet in March 2012, as part of how we establish One Public Service in Wales.

Shared Vision

The vision for Public Services in Wales is shared by Social Partners and can be summarised as public services which are:

- efficient, effective and delivered through collaboration;
- world class and exemplars of outstanding small country governance;
- designed with citizens at the centre and promote social justice and equality;
- provided by model employers and regarded as offering first choice careers; and
- delivered by a well-trained, well-rewarded and an engaged and motivated workforce.

The Public Service transformation agenda has evolved considerably over recent years from Making the Connections through Beecham, to Simpson and sharing services. This Agreement reflects these developments and provides the overarching framework for contemporary practice and progress across sectors including:

- the *Memorandum of Understanding 2011* (between Trade Unions and the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA));
- *Working Differently - Working Together A Workforce and Organisation Development Framework 2012* (NHS); and
- *Managing Change in Partnership 2011*(Joint Council for Wales).

Principles

High quality public services delivery must be synonymous with high quality employment practice. The Social Partners agree to adopt principles of good practice on service improvement, delivery and employment to underpin this Agreement.

Social Partners are committed to a set of principles directly relevant to managing change. At the same time nothing in this Agreement will formally substitute for, replace, or otherwise take precedence over established collective bargaining arrangements between Trade Unions and employers.

1. The partnership approach is between the Welsh public sector employers and recognised trades unions represented within the Workforce Partnership Council structures.
2. All Social Partners will use best endeavours to ensure employment continuity. Change can be very unsettling for staff. Social Partners agree that employment continuity is an important element of the change process. However, change need not be seen to be a barrier to employment continuity and can generate opportunities for the achievement of potential through rewarding, renewed and refreshed careers.
3. The Social Partners will support the use of the best standards of employment practice, such as systematic workforce planning, to manage deficits and surpluses in a planned way as we shape the future delivery of services.
4. Public service organisations embarking on change, which impacts on the workforce, will consult Trade Unions at the earliest appropriate opportunity and before any irreversible decisions are made. Any change should be properly planned and delivered through partnership. It is accepted that external factors may on occasion dictate the speed of the process but it is crucial that full consultation and negotiation amongst the social partners is followed in an open and timely manner with the aim of reaching mutual agreement. Equally it is crucial that this process is not constrained by either partner. High quality public services delivery must be synonymous with high quality employment practice. The Social Partners agree to adopt principles of good practice on service improvement, delivery and employment to underpin this Agreement.

Our way of working

Social Partners are committed to work in the following areas.

1. Workforce Engagement

The Social Partners are committed to supporting the Welsh Government's Strategic Workforce Framework which underpins the ambition that Public Services in Wales should be provided by exemplar employers.

In delivering their commitment the social partners will jointly:

- consult, negotiate and, in good faith, commit every effort to achieving agreement over proposed changes
- subsequently communicate any agreed change process to all stakeholders including the workforce.

2. Workforce Learning

Lifelong learning is central to securing the progressive improvement in public services which we seek. It is recognised that initiatives such as the "Wales Union Learning Fund" and partnership training continue to make a significant contribution to workplace change. It is essential that employers and trade unions at all levels fully engage in the partnership process.

3. Career Development

The development of careers that add value to the outcomes they achieve for Welsh communities and the Welsh economy is a key part of the public service policy agenda. The work undertaken by Welsh Government and others on secondments, management and leadership training is critical to this.

4. Equality and Well-being

The Social Partners support the implementation of equality-proofed pay and grading systems within the public service. The need for ongoing work to track and reflect legislative policy changes is recognised. There is commitment to develop good practice in partnership with the Equality community. The need to develop social justice in work, including equal pay, health and well-being issues, an ageing workforce, work life balance, and flexibility is recognised.

The Process

The following expectations will need to be fully met in order to implement this partnership agreement:

1. We expect employers and trade unions to agree a **Policy Statement** at the outset regarding managing change. The statement should include a clear vision supported by both parties which emphasises a corporate approach to managing change. It is the aim of the Social Partners that a culture of shared objectives and joint ownership of problem solving will become commonplace throughout.
2. We expect Social Partners to adopt early **planning** of change with clear and realistic timescales. It is essential that due process is followed which allows for all parties to properly consider and shape any proposals which may be under consideration.
3. We expect meaningful **consultation** and negotiation with Trade Unions to be mainstreamed into the change process. Cross sector and cross organisational working may lead to complex lines of accountability and particular attention should be paid to operating in a collaborative context. Employers and Trade Unions should seek to ensure the process is integrated and seamless.
4. We expect **communication** with all stakeholders, including the workforce, to be a key component of any change process. Social Partners should agree a communication plan in advance of any change process. In a properly functioning partnership joint employer and union communication with the workforce will play a significant part.
5. We expect Social Partners to facilitate and encourage **training** both in partnership working and change management to underpin the process. The training should include knowledge and application of this Agreement and any locally agreed arrangements.
6. We expect employers to commit to a full and lasting obligation to trades union recognition. In this setting, social partners will advocate **the benefits of trade union membership**, not least in assisting to help reduce labour turnover, increase staff morale and commitment, and improve productivity. This will involve local arrangements to facilitate and encourage trades union membership throughout the workforce

Disputes

This is a formal agreement of the Workforce Partnership Council which will be annually reviewed.

Any disputes relating to the terms of the agreement or its implementation should be taken through the appropriate joint sector disputes resolution procedure. In case of failure to resolve matters at this level, disputes may then be taken to the Joint Secretariat of the Workforce Partnership Council made up of the employer side secretary and the trades union side secretary.

