# Cheshire and Warrington Fair Employment Charter – Overview and update

LEP Board 26th July 2023
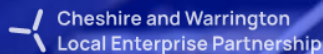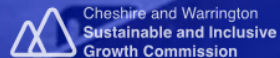
The **Cheshire and Warrington Fair Employment Charter** initiative is led by Cheshire and Warrington Leaders' Board to:
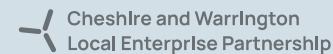
- celebrate good practice in fair employment;

- support businesses and organisations to raise standards in fair employment practices.

It will:

- apply to all sizes and sectors of organisations across public, private and third sector, and be free to enter;

- be subject to engagement and consultation.

# Consultation
## Ran March to mid-July 2023

Main questions:

- whether this charter is something companies would be interested to apply for

- any problems that would stop them being able to take part

- any details that need amending

[Cheshire and Warrington Fair Employment Charter Consultation Survey (surveymonkey.co.uk)](#)

An early analysis of consultation feedback will be tabled at Cheshire and Warrington Leaders' Board in July 2023
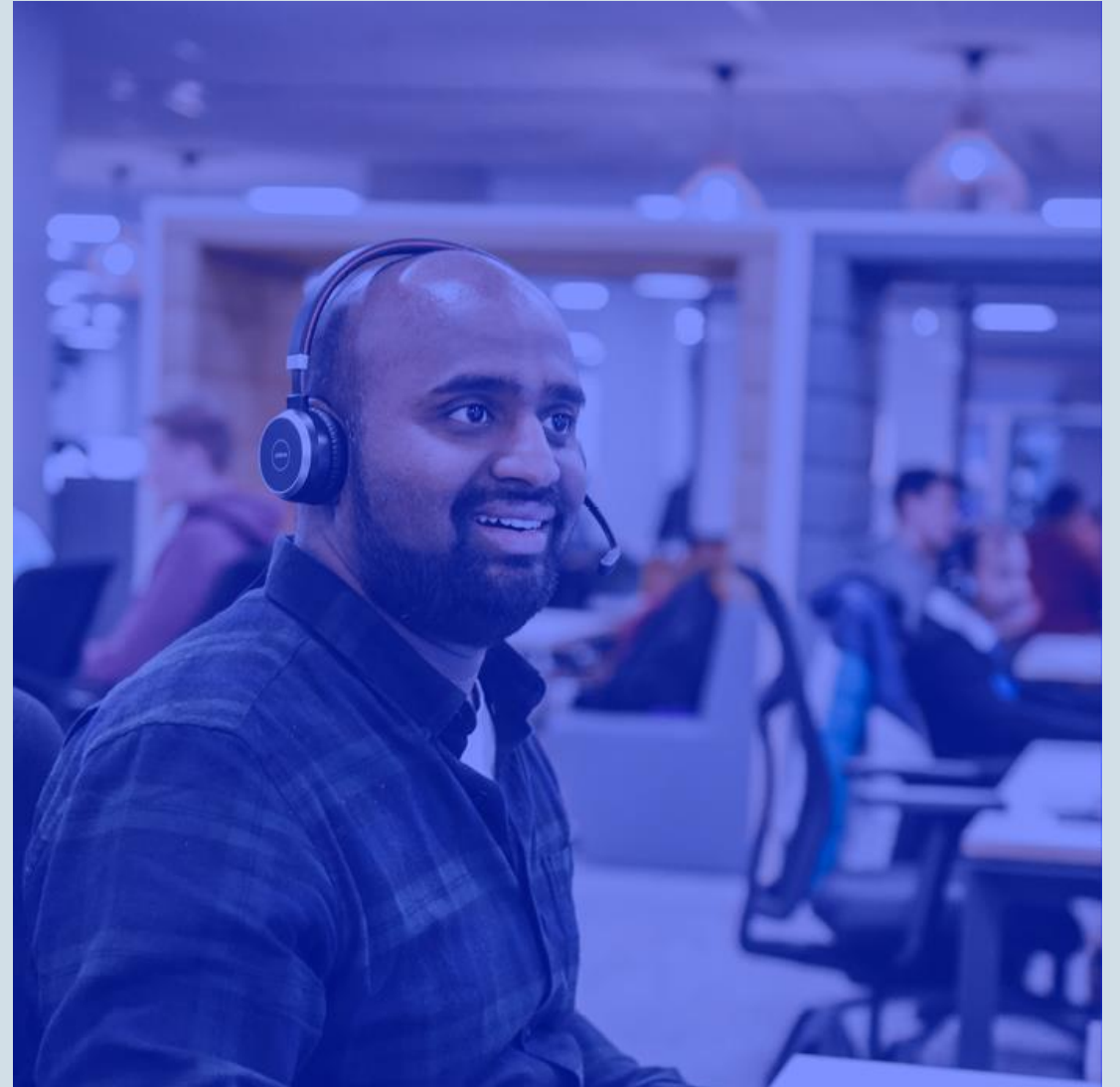
# Charter Rationale

**We have a strong economy and higher skills levels compared to the North West - but we also have challenges**

Challenges

- Too many jobs paid lower than the real living wage leading to in-work poverty

- Accessibility of jobs for disadvantaged groups e.g. young people, those with disabilities / impairments and those over 50

- Too many people experience poor mental and/or physical health

- Lack of flexibility in work (hours/days/location) can lead to lack of diversity of employees and limit recruitment success

Benefits

- Fair employment practices can make a business/organisation more attractive to all its stakeholders

- In a tight labour market, it makes economic sense for businesses to reach out to a wider pool of potential employees

- Independent research finds that the most diverse companies are also the most profitable (e.g. McKinsey 2020)

# Potential Membership Options

Each level of charter membership would be granted via a successful application to an independent expert panel.

A time limited membership would be recommended prior to re-accreditation or advancing up the levels.

The charter would be free of charge to join.

Supporter

- Organisations commit to the principles and begin their journey towards the next level (e.g. GM model)

Aspiring (Entry Level)

- Fewer standards to meet and recognition of work in progress to encourage early engagement (e.g. LCR model)

Full member

- Full charter standards to be met

Ambassador

- For organisations that have met and exceeded the standards

- These organisations would promote the charter to other organisations in C&W

# The Draft Charter Overview

# Full Member

- **Fair pay and secure employment**

Including paying the Real Living Wage; guaranteed hours of 16 or more a week; fair working conditions/contracts; and mentally/physically safe places of work

- **Accessible employment**

With inclusive access for everyone, regardless of their background; and flexible working arrangements, in terms of when, where and how they work

- **Workforce wellbeing**

Including high standards of health and safety, and a genuine focus on promoting the best possible mental and physical health for employees.

Also a focus on responsible business practices such as lowering carbon emissions and addressing modern slavery.

- **Employee development and fulfilment**

Reaching potential; empowering people; diverse pipeline of talent for leadership positions; encouragement to give back to communities.

- **Workplace engagement and voice**

Clear mechanisms to enable staff to influence key aspects of their role, and how their wider company operates, as well as having fair access to trades unions.

# Consultation Topics

- What impact the charter could have on employers, employees, or communities

- Likelihood of applying to join the charter

- Benefits and drawbacks of the charter

- Views on the fair employment standards and categories

- Achievability of the standards and any changes required

- Membership levels and time limit of award

- The requirement for support from a central charter team

- The provision of seminars and other information resources, and events such as Awards

- Potential use for public sector procurement (e.g. social value frameworks)

- If there is anything missing

- Any other comments

# Consultation initial feedback

**Next steps**

**Leaders' Board feedback Local Authority/LEP steering group – resolving issues identified and initial operational plan options**

- Need for the charter to be a meaningful badge - inspections

- Need for expert assessment panel to give confidence in the process

- Some standards could be a barrier for SME's, charities and some sectors

- Need for care on the admin burden and passporting between areas (LCR GM etc)

- Simplification of the language – accessibility

- Desire for training, events etc which needs to be resourced

- Different views on linking to public sector procurement

- Range of views on membership categories

- Anchor organisations leading by example

# THANK YOU

For any other queries please contact
fecharter@cheshireandwarrington.com
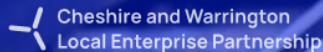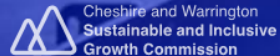
# Fair pay and secure employment: what it means and could look like

## Pay

✓ Paying all employees the Local Living Wage or the Real Living Wage or above.

✓ Providing sick pay from day one for all staff at a replacement income rate of 100% of their usual earnings for as long as possible.

✓ Auditing pay gaps between different groups as appropriate (e.g. larger employers who are required by law to report on gender and executive pay gaps to also address any ethnicity and disability pay variations where possible) and taking action to address.

## Guaranteed hours

✓ Giving employees clarity over the hours they work with a guaranteed minimum of 16 hours a week (unless the worker requests otherwise) including those paid hourly wherever possible, and ensuring work is in line with the Working Time Directive

✓ Giving reasonable notice for hourly-paid workers of rotas/schedules in advance

## Fair working conditions

✓ Minimising the number of non-standard employment contracts unless specifically requested by workforce/applicants e.g. temporary/agency; zero hours/self employed contracts

✓ Extending employed terms and conditions e.g. training and welfare for all in line with Agency Worker Regulations

✓ Secure environment, free from harassment, bullying, discrimination, victimisation etc

✓ Providing accessible, trusted and responsive ways of dealing with employee grievances and disciplinary issues

✓ Supporting initiatives and campaigns that educate and celebrate diversity and inform on issues such as racism, ageism (and other protected characteristics and disadvantage) etc

# Accessible employment: what it means and could look like

## Inclusive pathways into employment

✓ Providing additional opportunities to access jobs especially to those with barriers to employment, e.g. young people/those with health conditions or impairments/over 50's/other disadvantaged working in partnership with organisations such as DWP, Work Zones, colleges, local universities, The Pledge, Youth Federation etc to offer e.g.:

— Guaranteed interview schemes

— Work experience opportunities, supported internships and other paid internship schemes

— Apprenticeships and other access schemes which recruit and train on the job

— Wider awareness of job roles and promotion of opportunities using tools like Cheshire & Warrington Opportunities (candwopportunities.co.uk)

✓ Working with schools (primary and secondary) and colleges, including special schools and colleges and those in disadvantaged areas, on careers education opportunities and curriculum, engaging over the long-term, with reference to the Careers and Enterprise Company Employer Standards

## Flexible working arrangements:

✓ Giving employees the opportunity to work flexibly wherever possible, including

— when people work: flexible or compressed hours, adopting schemes such as Carer's Passport scheme

— where people work: agile working, home working, hybrid etc ensuring effective remote working / digital resources

— how much people work e.g. part-time, job share, unpaid leave etc

## Inclusive recruitment practices

✓ Commitment to inclusive, transparent, fair recruitment processes e.g. anonymised processes to help eliminate unconscious bias

✓ Eliminating recruitment barriers by e.g. advertising flexible working and access to reasonable adjustments at recruitment stage, recruiting with person specification or using activity or video based recruitment

✓ Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy

✓ Auditing data on recruitment for different groups to identify any issues for accessibility

✓ Advertising vacancies in places that may more easily reach disadvantaged groups

✓ Positive action to address underrepresentation in the workforce

✓ Supporting relevant inclusive campaigns, standards and schemes which bring down the barriers to employment for disadvantaged groups e.g. Disability Confident, Armed Forces Covenant, Carer's Passport Scheme, Age-friendly Employer Pledge, Ban the Box (supporting offenders) and relevant local schemes such as Homelessness and Breastfeeding Friendly Charters

# Workforce wellbeing: what it means and could look like

## Health and safety

✓ Delivering high standards of health and safety at work with sound health and safety policies, assessment and training covering all relevant locations

✓ Providing a healthy and supportive internal and external physical and/or digital environment as appropriate

✓ Making appropriate and reasonable adjustments for people with long-term conditions and disabilities etc (i.e. at recruitment stage and in-work)

## Fostering good physical health

✓ Travel planning advice - promotion of healthy and sustainable routes to work such as use of walking, cycling and public transport

✓ Provision of other financial benefits e.g. cycle to work schemes, travel card loans where possible, gym membership discount schemes etc

✓ Encouraging physically active meetings and standing desks where possible/appropriate

✓ Providing healthy food options e.g. when providing lunch/catering or, for larger organisations, in canteens. Ensuring lunch breaks are taken.

## Fostering good mental health

✓ Providing access to employee assistance programmes e.g. with counselling schemes, signposting to personal financial health advice and local support services e.g. Credit Unions/Citizens Advice etc

✓ Adopting practical initiatives such as mental health first aiders or Employment Advisors Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (EA in IAPT) programmes, supporting those with mental health difficulties to stay in work or re-gain employment.

## Supporting the environment and adopting responsible business practices

✓ Taking actions to lower carbon emissions within premises / throughout the supply chain, protecting biodiversity where possible, and ensuring alignment with UK Modern Slavery Act.

✓ Understanding and articulating organisational purpose and the impact it wants to have.

# Employee development and fulfilment: what it means and could look like

## Investing in learning and development

✓ Providing opportunities for continuous learning and development for all staff (including those on insecure contracts where appropriate)

✓ Training managers/supervisors in best practice people management

✓ Training and development in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

✓ Accessing support from relevant professional bodies where appropriate

✓ Developing mentoring skills for staff supporting new employees/apprentices

✓ Employees involved in shaping the vision and performance of the company

✓ People management and progression

✓ Ensuring people management includes regular and meaningful performance engagement, including fair processes for onboarding, probation and leaving.

✓ Providing fair access to progression opportunities, by auditing training, development and progression for different groups to understand and address gaps

✓ Ensuring barriers to progression opportunities are overcome, where possible

✓ Developing a diverse talent 'pipeline' into leadership positions e.g. through mentoring, coaching, and skills training and development

## Supporting the community sector and good causes

✓ Enabling employees to support the community, voluntary and faith sector, schools and other good causes if they wish, and supporting these as an organisation where possible e.g. release for volunteering days, ideally over a longer-term period rather than one-off

# Workplace engagement and voice: what it means and could look like

## Employee engagement activity

✓ to enable staff to contribute to the direction and success of the organisation and shape their roles

✓ to consult on key proposed changes to working conditions and contracts e.g. hybrid working, shift patterns etc

✓ with clear mechanisms of follow up and response

✓ with staff representation on committees/boards etc

✓ with a commitment to consider different perspectives for diversity purposes

## Representation

✓ Inform staff of their right to join a Trade Union and be willing to offer fair access to Trade Unions

✓ Giving employees the opportunity to form appropriate staff representative forums or networks with the organisation's support

# Draft Charter
## Aspiring Entry Level Member Standards

## Fair pay and secure employment: what it means and could look like

### Pay

✓ Identify those paid below Real Living Wage / Local Living Wage (where applies) and put plans in place to work towards achieving this level.

### Guaranteed hours

✓ Giving reasonable notice for hourly-paid workers of rotas/schedules in advance.

### Fair working conditions

✓ Audit practices to identify any atypical contracts and consider how and whether they are needed.

## Accessible employment: what it means and could look like

### Inclusive pathways into employment

✓ Advertise job opportunities more widely to young people and disadvantaged groups within the area e.g. using the Cheshire and Warrington Opportunities Portal.

✓ Offer experience in the workplace/supported internships where possible and actively consider the benefits of apprenticeships or similar opportunities for young people and other disadvantaged groups.

### Flexible working arrangements

✓ Audit flexible working arrangements (when, where and how much people work) and work towards enhancing the opportunities for flexible work.

### Inclusive recruitment practices

✓ Audit Equality, Diversity and Inclusion of staff and work towards improvements, with a plan to eliminate common recruitment barriers by e.g. advertising flexible working and access to reasonable adjustments at interview where possible.

# Workforce wellbeing: what it means and could look like

## Health and safety

✓ Delivering high standards of health and safety at work with sound health and safety policies including appropriate and reasonable adjustments.

✓ Understand staff views on whether the workplace is safe, healthy and supportive internally, externally and digitally and develop a plan for any improvements.

## Fostering good physical health

✓ Promotion of healthy and sustainable routes to work premises such as use of walking, cycling and public transport where possible

✓ Awareness of healthy eating options when procuring catering.

## Fostering good mental health

✓ Demonstrate an understanding of the importance of mental health in the workplace and raise awareness of freely available advice and guidance such as Credit Unions, Citizens Advice, NHS etc.

## Supporting the environment and adopting responsible business practices

✓ Investigating how to lower carbon emissions within premises using available resources such as zerocarbonbusiness.uk and working towards an action plan.

# Employee development and fulfilment: what it means and could look like

## Training, people management and progression

✓ Ensuring people management includes regular and meaningful performance engagement for all staff.

✓ Auditing training, development and progression for different groups (equality, diversity and inclusion) to understand and develop a plan to address gaps.

# Workplace engagement and voice: what it means and could look like

## Employee engagement activity

✓ To commit to consultation on key proposed changes to working conditions and contracts e.g. hybrid working, shift patterns etc.

## Representation

✓ Inform staff of their right to join a Trade Union and be willing to offer fair access to Trade Unions.

# THANK YOU

Cheshire and Warrington Fair Employment Charter - Cheshire and Warrington
Cheshire and Warrington Fair Employment Charter Consultation Survey (surveymonkey.co.uk)

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