Cheshire and Warrington Fair Employment Charter
Consultation

Cheshire East Council

Cheshire West and Chester

WARRINGTON Borough Council

Cheshire and Warrington Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission

Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership

Fair Employment Charter Consultation

We are seeking views on our Cheshire and Warrington Fair Employment Charter through a consultation which is taking place from March-June 2023. We are looking to hear the voices of all organisations with an interest in the charter, so that we can incorporate the feedback into the Charter development, to promote the benefits and good practice in fair employment across the subregion, and find out whether there is support for implementing this in Cheshire and Warrington.

The consultation will launch with an online event on Monday 20th March. You can sign up to the event here. Consultation events will then take place until June 2023 and details will be released soon.

A consultation survey will also launch on

Monday 20th March and run until the end of the consultation period. **You can participate by completing the online survey**

The following document sets out the plans for the Charter that will be tested in the survey and at the consultation events.

Cheshire and Warrington
Fair Employment Charter Consultation   March 2023

What is the Fair Employment Charter?

The Fair Employment Charter was initiated by the Cheshire and Warrington Leader's Board, with the intention of celebrating good practice and to support businesses and organisations to raise standards in fair employment practices.

The charter sets out five initial key aspects of what an employer needs to offer to demonstrate fair employment. It is recognised that each organisation will be on their own Fair Employment journey and so will specialise in some areas rather than others.

The Charter is for a variety of organisations, including all sizes of businesses and all sectors across the public, private and third sector, and would be free to enter.

Membership Tiers

There are options for tiers of membership level to help to accommodate a variety of types and sizes of organisations at different stages of their fair employment journey. There could be a Supporter (in principle) sign up, an Aspiring Entry Level, and a Full Member tier and potentially an 'Ambassador' category in the future.

The Charter Standards would form the Full Member tier, and the proposed Aspiring Entry Level includes a smaller number of the Standards. These have been selected and adapted to make it more accessible and less resource intensive for initial applications.

We have set out a brief summary of what each of the five initial key aspects of the Charter could mean and look like for the Full Membership Tier, followed by the standards for the Aspiring Entry Level tier:

Draft Charter
Full Member
Standards

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

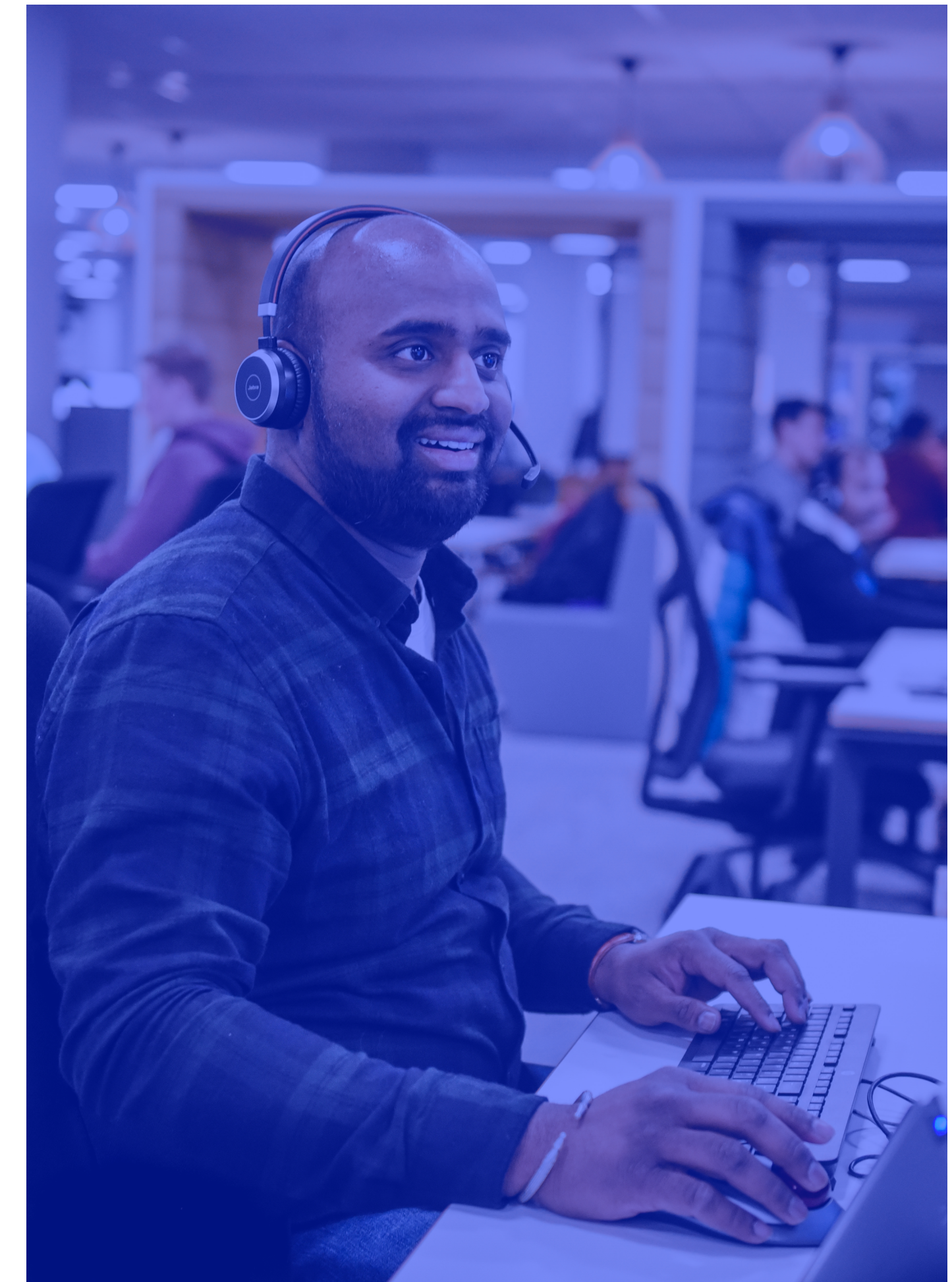✓ Encouraging physically active meetings and standing desks where possible/appropriate

✓ 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.

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Fair Employment Charter Consultation   March 2023

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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

Notice: This document provides a statement of best practice, the criteria that is listed is not legally binding.

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.

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