

Commitment

Socitm Advisory's commitment to Fair Work First








February 2023



Introduction

Fair Work First is the flagship policy by the Scottish Government to promote fair work and high-quality work across organisations in Scotland.

As a business that works across the breadth of the UK, we're proud to pledge to being a Fair Work First organisation and adopt fair working practices in seven key areas:

-  Appropriate channels for effective voice, such as trade union recognition
-  Investment in workforce development
-  No inappropriate use of zero-hour contracts
-  Action to tackle the gender pay gap and create a more diverse and inclusive workplace
-  Payment of the real Living Wage
-  Offer flexible and family-friendly working practices for everyone from day one
-  Oppose the use of fire and rehire practices

Work is a key part of our adult lives and we're dedicated to put wellbeing, inclusivity and progression at the forefront of that.

We already have a number of initiatives which are used widely within our organisation, including access to an Employee Assistance Programme for all permanent team members, access to wellbeing sessions and champions, an online training portal through Udemy, certification as a Disability Confident Employer, and more.



What are we already doing to be Fair Work First?

Our strategies and expectations are clearly articulated and regularly reviewed throughout our organisation. We have established a link between our vision, values and principles (competencies) that are assessed in each employee at least twice a year (and often more frequently) and discuss relevant corporate initiatives when required or at least during our All Hands Calls that occur every 2 - 3 weeks.

We actively seek our partnerships with like-minded organisations and always include partners and customers in our activities where it is commercially viable to do so. This includes giving them appropriate access to our Microsoft Teams environment for collaboration best practices.

We have weaved Fair Work First principles into our terms, conditions, and supplier agreements. Similarly, we have reviewed our employee Terms and Conditions give times since 2018 and included new clauses to encourage Fair Work First.

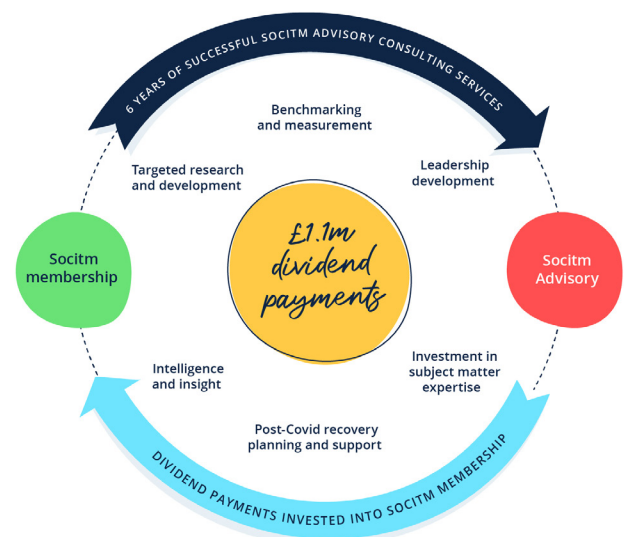
Clearly woven into our overall company strategy are annual expectations derived from the 5-year strategies that focus in our Diversity & Inclusion, Wellbeing and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) within our organisation. Each of these critical business areas has a dedicated Lead, who has built a team to deliver our expectations. These teams, usually of circa. 10 employees have engaged our business, partners and customers to build 5-year strategies with in-year goals from 2021 to 2025, and have formal time baked into their working week to devote to delivering success.

Each Lead has a seat on our Operations Board and is accountable to our Chief Operating Officer to ensure Executive

Stakeholder representation. Each Lead also regularly attends the Executive Board to discuss progress. This has the added benefit of demonstrating the importance of Fair Work First initiatives at our very highest corporate level.

Socitm Advisory are part of Socitm and are the sister company to our Membership body that boasts almost 2,500 corporate members. These members are primarily (but not exclusively) for the local government sector. This relationship provides a brilliant and two-way process for engaging with our market to test activities and ideas, generate feedback and to influence in the Fair Work First area.

In the 7 years that Socitm Advisory has been in existence, we have provided over £1.1m to our sister Membership business, which has been re-invested into local government initiatives, training and development and products and services. We have always understood the role that we can play in improving Public Services.



Our Socitm colleagues regularly produce ground-breaking research that helps develop how we approach the execution of our programmes. Our recent research on the [ethical use of emerging technologies and data](#), and our developing programme on

[post-Covid recovery](#) are notable examples. We have made significant progress in multiple Fair Work First initiatives, achieving formal accreditations where relevant, and remain on track for all our in-year goals. A details response within each of the seven Fair Work First initiatives follows below.

Effective voice

We recognise that giving our employees, partners and customers channels to effectively engage with us is the minimum, baseline requirement. However, we also understand that it is critical to get this part right else it hampers many other areas of activity.

We believe that effective engagement must be open, transparent and two-way. We have created several clearly defined communication events that encourage voices to be heard. Obvious events such as our regular All Hands Calls are well attended (usually in excess of 85% of our headcount) and have recently been expanded under our United in Ambition programme to include other areas of Socitm including our Membership colleagues.

However, a fantastic compliment to these events in the calendar of 'Learning Hour' activities covering many areas of Socitm life. The recent Learning Hour events celebrating Pride month were a fantastic success. In these events, Socitm employees representing the LGBTQ+ community volunteered their personal stories as a platform to educate and engage. Often very emotional, each participant recognised the almost unique chance Socitm Advisory created to encourage inclusivity, seek views and make a difference.

Similar events in the Wellbeing space take place as a 'Walk & Talk' - what better way to encourage physical wellbeing - and always, participation is part of our working

day! We also host sessions on social wellbeing and mental wellbeing, and we have also welcomed external experts to host sessions on financial wellbeing.

We have encouraged Communities of Practice (CoP) that have established the practical needs (and feedback) of our staff, partners and customers in core operational and strategic areas of our business. The CoPs provide an effective mechanism for collective bargaining and therefore an effective voice in a sector that traditionally does not support Trade Union activity.

We use the Best Companies survey process to regularly generate anonymous feedback from employees. We find this survey provides our staff with the ability to speak and be listened to. The results are key performance indicators that underpin our corporate strategy. We formally survey on an annual basis and include several pulse exercises during the year to take a temperature check on our progress.

We achieved a "two-star - outstanding" accreditation in 2019, the first year we submitted a response and have maintained steady growth year on year since. All feedback is used to generate future strategic initiatives and feedback plus tactical actions to deliver success are shared with the business to keep them informed and to show that their feedback is appreciated and listened to!

Diverse and inclusive workplace

We believe that everyone should have an equal opportunity to progress and develop within our organisation, regardless of any other factor that may be used to differentiate. Whilst this is, of course, a legal requirement, we passionately believe in being the kind of organisation that is naturally inclusive.

Our Diversity & Inclusion deliverables require us to conduct a root and branch analysis of our talent and people initiatives, practice and process to ensure that fairness exists throughout. All our staff are required to take an online unconscious bias learning programme (circa. 2.5 hours of learning) to ensure we all understand our obligations. We have reviewed our job advertising, specifications, and job descriptions to ensure the language contained within includes no bias.

Furthermore, we have adjusted our job descriptions to make sure they are accessible to all. We have recently undertaken an internal and external drive to showcase the many examples of flexible working that exist within our organisation to encourage more participants with different work patterns. As our customer success is built on outcomes (and not time) this should be an easy win, but often customer expectation on attendance is the limiting factor - so we have defined flexible employee conditions to our Statements of Work.

As of November 2022, 53.3% of our senior management roles (Executive Board, Heads of Service, and Non-Executive Directors) are taken by women, and 46.7% by men, with a target 50:50. At the start of 2022, this was 58.3:41.7 (male:female), and as a result, our most recent gender pay gap reporting has us well within the +/- 5% expectation. Furthermore, in January 2022 our Chief Executive Officer earned the equivalent of our average worker salary in 126 days, this number has since risen to 131 days, highlighting how our average company has increased over the past 12 months.

We have defined and documented formal (and therefore fair) processes for our employee development journeys. This includes a formal competency review programme, dedicated annual pay awards, publicised pay bands, a formal promotion journey (approved at Operations Board), and a clear process for all to apply for funds

for external training and qualifications.

We believe our workplace recognises the views, autonomy, status and contribution of one and all. Our staff recognise Socitm Advisory as a great place to work and the Diversity & Inclusion, Wellbeing and CSR agenda continues to develop ideas and activities to further this.

Our latest initiative, released in July, is the Socitm Woodland - which is a designated plot of land that will allow us to plant a tree for significant work moments. This could be to recognise a staff promotion, the delivery of a piece of work for a client, the onboarding of a new partnership, etc. Whilst showing respect to others (in a fantastically unique way) it also allows us to impact positively on the environment.

Secure employment (paying the living wage and opposing zero-hour contracts, and hire and rehire practices)

Socitm Advisory has never used, nor intends to use, zero-hour contracts. We believe in creating open employment avenues for associates, internships, apprenticeships, graduates, and most recently our Future Consultant Programme (FCP).

The FCP was designed to create consulting careers for individuals with relevant sector (e.g. local government) experience. As a Socitm Advisory Future Consultant our candidates have the opportunity to undertake training and development with important exposure to live projects and programmes in order to explore and utilise their skills in their areas of focus. As part of our 2020/21 Programme, we welcomed Future Consultants who wished to explore careers in User Research,

Marketing Research and Business Insight, Data Analytics, Service Design, CRM, and Technical and Business Architecture.

In March 2021, for the first time, Socitm Advisory voluntarily submitted its pay gap data. Whilst we were not obliged to do so (as a business with less than 250 employees) we wanted to demonstrate our commitment to improving in this space. We are pleased to show a dramatic improvement as we have dropped our underlying pay gap from approx. 11.0% to 2.4% which represents a small swing towards male pay. In our underlying pay employment areas within both Consulting and Operations we show a bias towards female pay which when coupled with an improving trend towards gender balance (57% male population, down from circa. 70% in 2019) bodes very well for the future.

Both pay equally (2022) and gender balance (2023) are in-year deliverables within our Diversity & Inclusion strategy. Our pay scales ensure that the Real Living Wage is more than covered in each role within our company. Socitm Advisory can confirm that all of our employees are paid at least the real living wage.

We recently changed our contracts of employment for permanent staff to include 4 days paid time off to be spent on volunteering activity and 3 days per annum to be used for 'Cultural Leave' - time to be taken off to celebrate religious events including Christmas, Eid or Passover. We felt these were important contractual changes to provide fair and secure contractual arrangements whilst encouraging our people to make a difference to society.

Socitm Advisory has never used, nor intends to use, hire and rehire practices.

Workforce development

We recognise that we can spend a significant amount of time at work. As referenced earlier, we believe the gift of a career is a sacred event and understand that we must work hard to nurture that gift. It has been noted already how we look to engage our staff, develop their skills and allow them to benefit society.

On top of this, we have a dedicated team who focus their activity on the wellbeing of our staff. This group creates activities within the mental, physical, social and financial wellbeing areas. To support, we have proactive alliances with Health Assured, who provide a wellbeing app to encourage healthy lifestyles and an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) for specific support needs. We regularly organise events to encourage staff to develop themselves in each of these areas, recently running sessions on financial planning and the positive impacts of great sleep!

Our resourcing team are tasked with supporting all of our permanent staff and associates in the execution of their deployments. We check in to make sure they are happy and healthy, and enjoying their assignments. Within HR, we retain a significant fund for external training, which is fully used each year. This year's external training includes qualifications in ACCA finance, ITIL5, AGMA Agile Project Management, and GDPR/DPO Certification. Our management staff are trained to understand career journeys and to create the opportunities in which staff can learn and succeed!

All staff are encouraged to develop their skills and are encouraged into lateral promotion if they are interested.

We recognise that the gift of an employee's career is a generous one and that once we are given it, we should protect it and work

hard to develop it. Socitm Advisory are in the formative stages of developing ourselves into a continuous learning culture. Over the last 24 months we have been working to ensure that self-service learning underpins all that we do. Every employee has access to the UdeMy online learning platform and is encouraged to invest in themselves.

By creating this culture, we expect to capture earlier the training and development needs of our employees and to build a greater confidence (through skills growth) and therefore level out the opportunity for all to be ready for promotion. Activity in this area continues at pace, notably as we reciprocate our online learning tools with Membership colleagues and in return open the Socitm Leadership Academy to Socitm Advisory employees. This will be critical to delivering upon our 2024 Diversity & Inclusion goal of creating a more inclusive leadership team.

We have recently introduced a company-wide quarterly Talent Management meeting which is designed to initiate peer review of employee progress and to ensure fairness, consistency and transparency.

Flexible and family working practices

We are fully remote, and to ensure we have equality we have in place flexible working, allowing us to attract talented consultants who are returning back to work after a period of absence, along with those that have other life commitments, enabling a work/life balance for all. We operate using a timesheet policy allowing our workforce to complete their work in their own time, giving massive flexibility to support families and such. All employees are given their IT equipment before day one, so they are ready to join the team immediately, as well as a DSI

budget to spend on further enhancements such as a chair or desk if required.

In 2021, we delivered the Government Equalities Office (GEO) and Local Government Association (LGA) sponsored [Returner's Programme](#) for people returning to work after a care-related break. We successfully helped up to 70 people undertake a dedicated 3-month structured learning and development intervention to facilitate their upskilling. The initiative also enabled access to council related job opportunities.

Additionally, we work with several organisations to support them in their endeavours to deliver a local Living Wage, ensuring that anyone brought into the programme is done so at the appropriate remuneration.

The wellbeing of our people is extremely important to us. That's why we've invested in and implemented a fantastic programme offering an Employee Assistance Programme, mental health support tools and e-learning training, accompanied by internal initiatives led by our own people. 100% of our people are covered by the programme, and family members have access to counselling and support. During the pandemic, our number one priority has been our people's health and wellbeing. We strive to continue to break the stigma surrounding mental health by fostering a workplace environment where people feel comfortable engaging in open, honest dialogue about mental health.

We also have a strategic driver to make working for the company as simple and easy as possible which includes investing in simple self-service tools. These include our automated expenses system which ensures claims are paid within 7 days to avoid any financial strain on our staff, as well as low touch HR systems for Annual Leave bookings and sickness making it simple for people to take time out when they most need it.

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