



NCVO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Good employment practice case study: Retention and diversity

Tim Gibbs, Team Administrator for Sustainability at the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) has kindly provided the following case study.

IPPR play a vital role in maintaining progressive thought through policy analysis, reports and publications, strong networks in government, academia and the corporate and voluntary sectors.

IPPR's aim is to continue to deliver far-reaching and realistic policy solutions that will produce a fairer, more inclusive and more environmentally sustainable world.

If you would like to find out more about the Institute for Public Policy Research, please visit www.ippr.org.uk.

What happened?

The cleaning contract industry used by private, public and voluntary sector offices alike is a dirty business, in more ways than one.

Many cleaners are on minimum wages and most work part-time, irregular hours with little prospect of their pay rising above 'rock-bottom'.

Cleaning contracts have been squeezed in recent years as offices have held down costs. Irregular, even corrupt practices are not unknown in the cleaning industry, and morale is low and staff turnover runs at very high levels.

These conditions particularly affect women and ethnic minority workers who make up the majority of the cleaning workforce.

15 non-governmental organisations (NGOs), including Rethink, The Big Issue Foundation, Forum for the Future, Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG), Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations (ACEVO), Prospect-us, Unltd (Foundation for Social Entrepreneurs) and Groundwork London have all taken up Living Wage services, a new, path breaking initiative offered by an ethical office services provider, Via 3 Office. Cleaners working in these offices all receive London Living Wages of £6.70 an hour, decent levels of sick pay and holiday pay, and have access to trade unions.

These charities all joined the Living Wage cleaning initiative because it is in tune with their values of social justice and diversity.

However, the experience of the Living Wage initiative in the private sector, which has been established longer, also suggests that Living Wage cleaning can lead to improved health and hygiene standards, and improved cleaning staff retention.

Who was involved (e.g paid staff, volunteers, trustees)?

Paid staff at IPPR, Via 3 Office (an ethical cleaning contractor) and cleaners.

What planning took place?

Three months researching living wages and three months working with Via 3 to set up a new ethical cleaning service.

Other London charities can now simply buy an off-the-peg ethical cleaning service from Via 3.

What has been the overall impact?

We are pleased to practically demonstrate the principles of social justice and diversity that we (IPPR) verbally advocate.

We feel we get a cost-effective service because cleaning staff retention has improved.

Are you planning any future developments to maximise the impact of this process?

For living wage cleaning to spread throughout the voluntary sector Via 3 Office has 15 NGO contracts and is in negotiations with a number of very well known charities.

What one piece of advice would you give organisations in a similar situation?

It is very easy and there are few/no extra costs

About HR and your workforce

How many paid employees do you have?

21-50 full time

How many trustees sit on your board?

8-10

How many volunteers do you have (non-paid staff, excluding trustees)?

1-10

Does your organisation have an HR Strategy?

Yes

Does your organisation have a recruitment policy?

Yes

Does your organisation have a diversity policy?

Yes