

NSPCC



Community initially secured recognition with the NSPCC in 2011 when members of the British Union of Social Work Employees transferred into Community.

This case study proves a useful example of how a trade union led by its workplace representatives can benefit an organisation through their understanding of the sector in which they are operating, and the things that drive both organisations in the sector and the workforce.

Partnership working

The way in which Community and NSPCC have worked in partnership has helped to consistently deliver over the last decade for both the organisation and the workers.

One of the best examples of partnership working between the NSPCC and Community was in the creation of the organisation's mental health policy. Representatives from Community raised the importance of having such a policy as a result of the union's mental health campaign.

Following this, representatives and officials from Community engaged with NSPCC to refine and strengthen the suggested policy. This resulted in a constructive and thorough policy that both the employees and the employer were happy with.

Before the mental health policy came into effect, managers reported struggling to manage mental health within their teams. However, since the introduction of the policy, the Community representatives report a noticeable shift in the culture in the workplace, including a much more consistent approach to mental health.

Organisational benefits

As a union Community is big enough to have real power and influence, which is used in the interests of members, but also small enough to be able to dedicate time and resources to properly understand each sector in which it operates. The advantages of having a recognised trade union that can support and share best practice across the sector to both help organisations improve their

practices and raise sector-wide standards is particularly valuable in the third sector. Brett Terry, People Director at NSPCC highlights this saying, "Community and their representatives have a great insight into what we do, what people think and what will work best".

Brett outlines the value of having Community support whilst the NSPCC rolled out their Childline development programme through their national services division, saying "their pragmatic approach, ideas and support enabled us to get the best outcome." Claire Johnson, Director of National Services at NSPCC, identifies this is an ongoing working practice between the two organisations saying, "we always get Community involved early because they ask challenging questions that help us to be better informed and prepared and leads to us getting the best results for everyone".

The organisations operating within the third sector often have values-led aims and objectives, this is reflected in their staff.



The people who work in these organisations at every level want to make a difference and are committed to the values of their organisations. Community recognises the ethos and drivers of both third sector organisations and their workforce and wants to work with them to ensure they are using practices and policies that can ensure they achieve success. Community understands that third sector organisations accomplish their aims in part by having a happy, healthy and motivated workforce that is productive and supportive of the long-term strategy of the organisation.

As Melantha Chittenden, Research and Policy Officer at Community explains, “when you have a largely values-led and altruistic workforce, if they don’t agree with your strategy, it’s almost impossible to succeed.” Going on to say, “it’s where many an organisation has failed in the past – by not properly valuing their workforce, and by failing to understand how important it is for them to buy in to the long-term strategy. Community helps this happen through two-way communication with our members”.

Employee benefits

The benefits of Community membership for people working in the third sector can be substantial. Aside from the individual representation, training and development opportunities as well as discounts and offers members can receive, membership can yield positive and productive changes in workplace culture.

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Community understands that often people can be hesitant to push their employer on issues, which if they go unaddressed can lead to disaffected employees. As Alasdair McDiarmid explained, “people don’t want to be in conflict with their employer, even when things go wrong or aren’t working how they should be - they want resolutions through constructive discussion, and to feel like they are being listened to”.

This is particularly true in the third sector given the types of people who are attracted to this work. It is because Community’s approach to constructive partnerships aligns so well with the views that third sector workers often hold that has led hundreds of people throughout the years who work in the sector to join Community and enjoy the benefits of membership.

The future

Early in 2019, a new recognition agreement was signed between the NSPCC and Community which shows an even stronger

commitment to working together. Building on the relationship, the new agreement extended Community’s recognition to all staff, including casual workers.

Overall, the third sector represents a relatively under-unionised sector and these poor levels of unionisation are reflected in the terms and conditions in many of the workplaces. For instance, according to the Living Wage Foundation, over a quarter of people working in the sector are paid below the real Living Wage.

There are clear gaps between the morally noble aims of many organisations in the third sector and the experiences of many of the people who work there. Community plans to continue to build new relationships in the sector, in the interests of the union, the employers and the workforce.