

Working in partnership

with small charities



Foreword

Roy Rickhuss CBE

In today's economy, employers face significant challenges. These range from the long-term impact of the 2020 coronavirus pandemic and economic crash, to the effects of technology and automation.

Many organisations are under huge pressure. This is especially true of small charities, some of whose budgets are stretched ever tighter despite increasing demand.

A challenging economic climate has a knock-on effect on charity workers, and we know that by working in partnership with good employers, we can help them through these tough times.

At Community we believe that we achieve the best for working people by engaging with rather than against good employers. We want to be sat around the table, working with you through the difficulties that lie ahead and delivering for our members. With your success as an organisation, comes opportunities for us to help you deliver security in employment for your workforce, improved terms and conditions and opportunities to grow and develop.

Community is here to help small charities, many of whom may struggle to provide as much training and development as workers need.

We can open up opportunities to access training and lifelong learning for employees to prepare them for the changing world of work.

Community is a union that looks to the future. We recognise that the world of work keeps changing and our goal is to make sure that the interests of workers are put at the heart of that change and to ensure they are prepared for whatever they face.

Of course, workers aren't just facing challenges at work. We understand that what happens in communities and personal lives, and what happens in the workplace interact. We are here to support people through every aspect of their lives.

In this document we will introduce you to the work we can do to help support small charities, and the people who work for them.

If you're interested in how community could help you as an employer, your employee relations or your people management, then I hope we will have the opportunity to meet and discuss how we could work together in the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Roy', written in a cursive style.



Three key pillars

to our approach to working with charities



Partnership working



Community focus



Skills & training

Partnership working

A partnership approach has been at the core of the way Community works with employers for decades. We fundamentally believe that although employers and employees sometimes disagree and have different priorities, we are united by a fundamental interest in the sustainable success of that organisation.

For charities we know that means constant focus on delivering for your beneficiaries, and we know that you have passionate and motivated staff who want to make the world a better place.

But we also believe that better terms and conditions at work help your staff to do that even better. We have always worked constructively with good employers to ensure that organisations succeed.

Adrian Axtell, National Officer at Community, explains “Investing in the workforce shows workers that the organisation values their work, which in turn increases productivity, likely to result in increased success”.

We know that employees of small charities may feel uncomfortable raising issues, but if these go unaddressed employees can feel disaffected. 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 partnership aligns so well with the views that third sector members often hold that so many have joined Community.



Small Charities Coalition

A case study

Community has built a strong relationship with the Small Charities Coalition, an organisation that represents thousands of small charities across the UK.

We've helped to organise a series of training webinars for members of the Small Charities Coalition as part of this ongoing partnership, from equalities in the workplace to learning and training.

Many of the SCC's member charities are small organisations within limited budgets, and managers see the offer of training through Community as a powerful way to ensure that everyone gets the development they need.

For many small charities, understanding employment law can be a real challenge. The costs of expert help are usually prohibitive and takes away from the service to beneficiaries, that is why partnering with Community is so important for the Small Charities Coalition. Access to advice, support and resources to help small charities get off to the best start with working relationships is so vitally important to their success. Community is an organisation that we can talk to and listens, and for small charities that is hugely important.

- Rita Chadha, CEO of the Small Charities Coalition



NSPCC

A case study

Community is the recognised union for all employees at the children's charity NSPCC. Since securing recognition the union has built a partnership with management through positive engagement and in the creation and development of policies and practices that benefit everyone throughout the organisation.

For example, we worked together on developing policies around the menopause, and mental health, both of which are significant workplace issues. We also developed policies on disciplinaries and grievances.

As Claire Johnson, Director of National Services at NSPCC explained “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.”

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 of the sectors in which it operates. This allows us to support and share best practice across the charitable sector and improve practices and standards.



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- Adrian Axtell, National Officer at Community



Community focus

Community's name comes from our ethos: our belief that trade unionism should not be confined to the workplace. We represent workers not just at work but also in the community.

Because we know that the issues that affect people in their personal lives affect them at work too, so as a trade union we seek to organise change locally, to organise stronger communities.

Community's General Secretary, Roy Rickhuss CBE, argues "We need to set out a positive vision of the union movement, one that goes beyond the workplace and out into our communities".

As a campaigning union, we practice our ethos day to day in workplaces and beyond.

Our campaign on mental health in the workplace has educated our members, their colleagues and families on the importance of taking care of our mental health and tackling the stigma.

Over the past three years we have worked with Mental Health First Aid England to give our members the opportunity to become Mental Health Awareness Champions and First Aiders, whilst also working with employers to join our campaign and support our members' and their employee's mental health at work.

Skills & training

The modern economy requires workers to re-skill and up-skill, to adapt to changing technology and the changing demands of their roles. Employers across the country face a skills challenge from recruitment to retention, and we know charities are no different. Workers have to keep updating their skills to remain productive at work.

Community is committed to working with members to help them develop their skills and increase their productivity and employability.

Since 1997 Community's learning team has supported over 37,000 people, including establishing workplace learning centres and programmes, and signing learning agreements with employers.

Professional development shouldn't be the exclusive domain of those with the deepest pockets, which is why our training is available completely free to Community members. We also work across workplaces to develop training offers that can be supplied to everyone in the organisation.



Aspire Community Works

A case study

Aspire Community Works is a community interest company that aims to provide opportunities for people who are disadvantaged by the labour market. These disadvantages include, for example, not having formal education, having caring responsibilities and not having English as a first language.

The community business manages estates management services for councils and other organisations such as housing associations. It carries out work like horticulture, grounds maintenance and cleaning which are traditionally low paying industries.

Aspire believes in creating quality employment in these traditionally low paid low status jobs, by providing decent pay and employment conditions, treating people with respect, and devolving power and responsibility to the frontline to manage their works effectively.

Aspire first joined forces with Community following the potential loss of key contracts. The employees wanted a partner who would help support Aspire's negotiations and ensure that workers would be protected if they were transferred to another organisation as part of the contract change.



Aspire has also benefited from Community's support as it developed its market shaping activities, emphasising the importance of granting public contracts to responsible organisations that treat staff well, pay a living wage, and ensure decent working conditions.

Aspire's "Better for us" campaign promotes good procurement practices that support community-based organisations. It has launched a commission to investigate how good work standards can be embedded in procurement frameworks and Community's Head of Policy and Research has been an active member of the Commission which has recently published its Guide to Good Procurement.

Director Dr Katharine Sutton said "Our workers reached out for help when the organisation needed support from a national organisation while ensuring that their individual futures would be protected by a Union. With the support of Community, we successfully negotiated a review and won back a contract and now everyone within Aspire is a member of Community. As we move and develop our business, our partnership is developing."

Training has also been a key benefit of partnership working, as Katharine explains: "We recently signed a learning partnership agreement with Community which is absolutely wonderful for smaller organisations like us.

All too often we find that formal training and accreditation is far too costly, so the learning agreement enables our workers and disadvantaged members of our local communities to access free training. For us it's enabled, for example, our horticultural workers to up their skills even further.

Within a fortnight of signing the Partnership Agreement, we have 3 Learning Representatives leading our Learning Partnership within the organisation and our first Urban Gardening certificate, of which there will be many more".



Conclusions

As a trade union, Community has continued to transform and react to the challenges of the working world. Whether that's supporting members who have left traditional industries to become self-employed, helping members to develop digital skills for the digital age or expanding into new sectors, we know that we must adapt to keep meeting our members' needs.

Community understands the values of small charities and the dedication of staff to making the world a better place. Community recognises the ethos and drivers of third sector organisations and their workforces and wants to work with them to ensure that they are using practices and policies that can help ensure they achieve success.

The Community model with our focus on partnership, a concern for the wider community and support with learning and development, is effective. Despite the challenges facing the union movement, we have continued to grow, and a large part of that growth has been from charities and charity workers.

If you would like any additional information on the topics discussed in this document, or want to hear more about how Community can work alongside your organisation, get in touch with our team by emailing thirdsector@community-tu.org.

The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust is pleased to have signed a partnership agreement with Community. We understand that our people are at the heart of our organisation. We recognise that Community can play an important role in helping us to further build on our long tradition as a responsible employer. We look forward to working together to develop this relationship for the benefit of all.

- Celia McKeon, CEO of Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust



We are Community

The modern union for a changing world.

0800 389 6332

thirdsector@community-tu.org

www.community-tu.org

