

# Draft Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill

## Acas response

21 April 2021

This is the Acas Executive response to the Welsh Government's [consultation on the Draft Social Partnership and Public Procurement \(Wales\) Bill](#).

### Our response

I am delighted at having this opportunity of responding on behalf of Acas to the Welsh Government's consultation on the Draft Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill.

As you know, Acas is a statutory, non-departmental public body with a duty to improve employment relations throughout Great Britain. In 2019/2020, Acas handled approximately 800,000 calls from individuals and employers to our national helpline and our website received nearly 15 million visits from people seeking advice and support. During the year we also provided conciliation in more than 550 collective disputes (31 in Wales) and ran some 3,000 training sessions on a wide range of workplace-related topics including just under 300 sessions in Wales. Much of Acas's resource, however, is devoted to providing early conciliation before individuals can bring a claim to an employment tribunal. Last year we received nearly 140,000 such early conciliation notifications.

As a tripartite body guided by a Council made up of individuals drawn from employer, trade union, legal and academic backgrounds Acas is well acquainted with social partnership working. We therefore welcome the Welsh Government's commitment to working in partnership to make a difference to people, public services and workplaces in Wales and agree with the reasoning set out in the consultation for bringing forward this new Social Partnership Bill.

We note the Welsh Government's plans to take forward the recommendations of the Fair Work Commission and to make Wales a 'fair work nation'. Acas liaised with Professor Dickens and the Fair Work Commission team providing our own insight on the key characteristics of fair work as set out in its final report and we are pleased to see that these are to be turned into objectives that can be developed and reported upon in Wales. We recognise there are challenges in taking forward this agenda in a time of great economic turmoil brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, when many businesses both large and small are currently struggling to survive. However, we believe it remains a vital enabler of stronger and more productive businesses as well as delivering better quality jobs.

One way of meeting this challenge will be to bring to the fore the positive impact fair work can have on organisational productivity and profitability. Fortunately, there has been a recent compilation of commentary and analysis, including a contribution from Acas, published by the Carnegie UK Trust ([Can good work solve the productivity puzzle? Collected essays 2020](#)) which the Welsh Government might find helpful in its work taking this agenda forward. For instance, the analysis published in the report shows that there is a positive correlation between fair work (or good work as it is referred to in the report) and productivity especially in regard to those aspects related to pay and benefits, health, safety and psychosocial wellbeing, job design and employee voice. Interestingly, the analysis also found that poorer quality work strongly correlates with poor productivity which suggests that the greatest gains may come from increasing the quality of work among the "long tail" of companies currently with the poorest offering.

As well as promoting the positive benefits of fair work, if the Welsh Government's ambition is to be achieved, organisations will require help and support in delivering fair work on the ground. Although there will be a number of businesses and organisations that are

comfortable with social partnership working many others will be unfamiliar with the concept and will need practical help if they are to make it work. Acas has many years of experience of helping organisation with social partnership working and would be very happy to work with the Welsh Government to consider the implementation of the new Bill as well as provide practical support at a company and organisational level. For instance, we could offer training and deliver webinars to inform people and share good practice around the Fair Work agenda.

Turning to the Social Partnership Council, Acas supports the intentions for this new body set out in the consultation document. Acas also supports the idea of creating sub groups to support the main Council in its work and would be very happy to serve on any of these groups where it was felt that our knowledge and experience could be put to good use.

Acas hopes that these comments are helpful and looks forward to working with the Welsh Government to both develop and take forward this important piece of work.

Susan Clews  
Acas Chief Executive