

## Fair Work translates directly into retention

“The concept of Fair Work is pretty simple. It’s basically ‘Do to others as you do to yourself’. I’ve got no business if I don’t have my staff, so why *wouldn’t* I want to look after them and be fair?”

“Because I don’t work on the shopfloor, it’s super-important to get input from the people who are serving customers and in the factory. Open lines of communication are really important.”

“As a small company, we have to react to the market very quickly, and the way we can do that is to be engaged with our staff. Having open lines of communication running through the business helps with that.”

Ruaridh Hesketh - General Manager



Established in 1971, our family businesses has grown into one of the most popular and successful producers of high-quality marmalade, jam, chutney and other preserves in Scotland, selling for both retail and foodservice markets. We also have an online shop and coffee shop in Gatehouse of Fleet.

### Starting the Fair Work journey

Galloway Lodge made a commitment to Fair Work when we were applying for grant funding from South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE); it was part of the process. Once we started looking into what it involves, we saw we were doing a lot of Fair Work practices already.

In those areas where we still have targets to complete, we’ve committed to do so within three years, so the journey is very manageable.

### Benefits of offering Fair Work

For us, the benefit of offering good working practices comes down to **retention**. As a result of what we do, our retention levels are high for our industry: we’ve only had around 4 people leave in the past 5 years.

Retention matters because it affects everything: productivity, quality, customer service. If our staff stay longer in their jobs:

- They understand our systems and products, leading to higher quality.
- We get efficiency and productivity gains from having a full team of trained, committed people.
- Our customers get to know them and receive a better customer experience.

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Currently, retention is more important than ever because of labour shortages:

- It can take months to recruit a new staff member.
- It takes around 4 weeks to get that new staff member fully up to speed in our factory or coffee shop, and training takes up management time.
- During all those months and weeks, we would not be operating at 100% strength.

The benefits of retaining staff are hard to quantify, but they are undeniable. As our general manager Ruaridh Hesketh says, “The thought of changing staff every 6 months would be an absolute nightmare.”

That’s why Fair Work is good for business. So, how do we offer it in practice?

## **Training and opportunities**

The prospect of training isn’t necessarily the reason why people join the business, but it’s a reason why they stay. Our staff turnover is low because people realise we invest in them, and we spend time helping them develop.

- Our training provision ranges from mandatory safety training in the factory to barista training to management training.
- We use a mix of external, online and in-house provision. For example, some of our coffee shop staff have been to Glasgow to train with our coffee suppliers, but we also spend time with them here helping them to develop their coffee and customer skills.
- To date, we haven’t been in a position to offer apprenticeships, but we want to do this in future and are looking into it.

Providing opportunity is also crucial, so we promote from within. Five of our staff have been with us for 10 years or more, progressing through the company, and our head of sales first started as a 14-year-old working in the café.

## **Workforce voice**

Giving employees a voice is another important element of Fair Work and for us, as a small business, that comes down to having very open lines of communication. We have staff WhatsApp groups to stay in touch, regular management meetings with our teams at both sites, and the management team are on-site every day and very available.

## **Respecting people’s needs**

Much of the Fair Work approach is about respecting people – from not using zero hours contracts to avoiding gender pay gaps. For us, it also involves respecting people’s lives and family commitments. For example:

- Factory shifts finish at 3:00 pm to fit with local school timings.
- Some staff work from 9:05 am to 2:55 pm to manage pick-up times.
- We organise weekend working at the coffee shop fairly to fit around people’s commitments.

Covid-19 and rising costs have delivered a financial hit to many food and drink and hospitality businesses, including ourselves. But even in more difficult times, there are many things employers can do to support staff, provide a good working environment and offer opportunities, security and respect. That for us is the essence of Fair Work.

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## Where to get advice and support

**Talk to other businesses:** If you have an issue or want to develop best practice, ask them how they do things.

**[Acas website](#):** If you have employment or HR issues, this can be a useful source of advice.

**[Fair Work Employer Support Tool](#):** We used this to understand what's involved in Fair Work and to assess our own practices.

**[Skills Development Scotland](#)** has advice on workforce development and skills

For further information about Apprenticeships, click [here](#)

## What is Fair Work?

The Scottish Government's concept of 'Fair Work' is 'work that offers effective voice, respect, security, opportunity and fulfilment'. Its [Fair Work First guidance](#) asks businesses to, eg:

- Invest in skills and training
- Have an effective workforce voice (this could be through unions but there are other ways too)
- Ensure no inappropriate use of zero hours contracts
- Take action to tackle the gender pay gap
- Pay real living wage

Many food and drink businesses find they are already following Fair Work practices (or going beyond them) as part of their audits for certification schemes or retail contracts. They're also becoming a requirement for many public sector contracts and grants.