

Case Study

**SCOTLAND
FOOD & DRINK
PARTNERSHIP**

Fair work makes practical sense

“I speak to virtually to every member of staff every day ... I don't know how else you would run a business.

Through running apprenticeships, we often get really cracking young people into the business.”

Scott Jarron, co-owner, Scott Brothers Butchers



Who we are

At Scott Brothers, we've been selling great meat for over 80 years and three generations. We have around 65 staff, working across our factory, kitchen, bakery, deliveries, online shop and office, as well as in our Dundee and Tayside shops.

Fairness has always been an important principle for Scott Brothers. We've long had a 'Fair and Proper' pricing promise for our customers, and it makes obvious sense to treat our workforce fairly too.

When we came across the Scottish Government's Fair Work initiative, we found that we were already applying several Fair Work principles without even realising it! But it's useful to have a more formal checklist and framework through the Fair Work action plan.

Good employers get good staff

Some elements of the Fair Work action plan are almost common sense for a business like ours because they help attract and retain staff – crucial when our sector is facing labour shortages. To attract and retain people, we have to listen to what they want. So,

- we don't use zero hours contracts
- we try to keep pace with real living wage
- we've recently reduced working hours
- we've improved our staff facilities, such as kitchen areas. Some of the work here can be physically demanding so it's important that people enjoy their breaks.



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Skills investment runs company-wide

Like every food business, we face challenges with recruiting and keeping people, and we therefore have various programmes in place to build loyalty and skills.

Apprenticeships: Scott Brothers first started offering apprenticeships in the 1950s, and we still try to carry around three apprentices in the business on a rolling basis. It supports young people and supports our business.

- The apprentices do a Modern Apprenticeship through Craft Skills Scotland.
- A few stay in the business with us if they are very good, and the others leave us with a valuable qualification which is much in demand.
- We currently have two apprentices who stayed on after completing Stage 2; now they're doing Modern Apprenticeship levels 3 and 4.



Wider skills development: We develop our other staff too, through a variety of external courses and training in customer service, first aid, hygiene, health and safety and more, through Craft Skills Scotland and other external providers.

In-house training: A really important aspect of training is to take all our people right the way through the whole process of what we do as a business. They may be responsible for 20% or less of the actual finished product, but we want them to understand how other people rely on what they do (or vice versa). It makes their job more interesting and fulfilling and can also contribute to great staff ideas and problem-solving.

Communication and employee voice

Talking with staff, as a two-way process, is a fundamental part of how we operate as a business. "Every day, I go into every area, speak with every manager and others, see what their priorities and workload are, and how best we can manage all that," explains our co-owner Scott Jarron.

We also sit down regularly with each department – maybe to improve how things are working, maybe to pass on positive reviews.

In particular, if there are any changes in the business or new developments, we like to pull everyone together. We want to make sure that everybody is there together, getting the same message directly and the same opportunity to ask questions.

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The benefits

Measures and approaches like these, which align with the Fair Work action plan, translate into a safer and more positive workplace where people want to come to work with us and continue the Scott Brothers tradition of selling great meat and good food at fair prices. When a job comes up in different parts of our business, we ask staff to refer friends and

families. We've been quite successful at doing that, and it doesn't happen unless you treat people fairly and well.

There's a lot of research around currently showing that high staff turnover can lead to higher employment costs and lower efficiency, quality and productivity. By following Fair Work principles like respect, opportunity and making work fulfilling, we can make a real difference to the success of our business.

Where to get advice and support

[Craft Skills Scotland](#): we do Modern Apprenticeships and much of our other skills development through the training arm of Scottish Craft Butchers.

[ACAS website](#): a useful reference point for both employers and employees on workplace rights, best practice etc.

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

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

Scottish Enterprise **[Fair Work Employer Support Toolkit](#)**

Putting 49 of our staff through CPR training in 2019 turned out to be a fantastic decision. At the start of 2021, one of our butchers collapsed in the shop with a cardiac arrest, and different staff members were able to do CPR on him continuously until the ambulance arrived. He recovered and is now back in his old job full-time!

What is Fair Work?

The Scottish Government's concept of 'Fair Work' is 'work that offers effective voice, respect, security, opportunity and fulfilment'.

In practice, the Scottish Government's [Fair Work First guidance](#) asks businesses to, e.g.:

- 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 are 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.