Case Study - Impact Hub Inverness and the right to a healthy and safe working environment

About the Impact Hub

The Impact Hub Inverness is a co-working space for entrepreneurs, businesses and organisations to network, collaborate and innovate, and was created by the Highlands and Islands Social Enterprise Zone (HISEZ). We are located in Inverness, and provide a co-working space with hot desks, meeting rooms, consultancy and networking events. We welcome anyone working across the Highlands and Islands to foster an environment of fairness, inclusion, cooperation, innovation, entrepreneurship, and flexibility.

How we are working on legal rights

> "One of the key principles for us in developing an Impact Hub is about reducing social isolation – of both the individual worker, and of the region in a global context" - Impact Hub feasibility study, p.8

Our aim is for everyone in Scotland to be able to work in good conditions. This means the right to a safe and healthy work environment should be met. Versions of this right are secured in different legislations:

- Article 7: The right to just and favourable conditions of work in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights)
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 in the UK, and the
- Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, monitored by the UK Health and Safety Executive

More guidance can be found in the Equality and Human Rights Commission's 'Guide to Business and Human Rights' and the 'Sexual harassment and harassment at work: technical guidance'.

In practice, the right to a safe and healthy work environment can take many shapes and forms. Home working environments might not always be the healthiest to work in. Reliable insulation and heating are not an option for everyone, especially during a cost of living crisis. Relationships at home might be strained which can make working from home even more stressful. Office spaces can be rare and costly, and rural areas often have disjointed public transport infrastructure.

Some barriers to a healthy work environment might affect mental health and wellbeing, including:

- frustration or anxiety over slow internet connectivity
- lack of a quiet and confidential work environment (where the space is shared with flatmates, friends, and family)
- Social isolation, which is especially prevalent in rural areas of Scotland, where self-employment and working from home is more prominent ([HIE, 2022](#)). This has become an even wider issue since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, where remote working became the norm for many workers.

The Impact Hub provides fast WiFi, quiet, confidential and comfortable desk spaces, and room for connecting and collaboration.

The Impact Hub is part of a global network of local organisations working together to build more inclusive and sustainable (business) communities. At the point of writing, there are over 100 hubs around the world.

One of the Impact Hub's core values follows [Sustainable Development Goal 10: Reduced inequality](#). Our values impact our everyday actions at the hub. We treat everyone fairly, regardless of their background, and we want to provide a space that keeps the indigenous roots of Scotland alive.

We aim to connect people all over the world and foster a sense of global belonging. One way we do this is with the Global Passport programme. Impact Hub members can travel to every Impact Hub within our network and use their coworking space. This helps further one of the principles on which human rights are based: that we are all equal and human.

Obstacles to rights in our work and how have you overcome them

One barrier we know is that the value of a safe work environment does not mean this is a lived practice. How do we protect the safety and wellbeing of anyone using our services? One measure is our health and safety and equalities policies. Of course, a policy or value alone does not guarantee a safe workspace. But just like rights legislation, they provide frameworks against which we can measure our behaviour, and form a basis for constructive conversation and improvement. We actively encourage our members to give feedback and contribute to the evolution of facilities and environment in the Hub space.

The Highlands and Islands of Scotland are large, and not everyone will be able to travel to Inverness. We are keen to pass on our learnings to expand access to a healthy and safe working environment throughout rural Scotland. For example, we have provided business support to the Dunbeath and District Centre for the creation of a health and wellbeing hub in Dunbeath to serve the South East of Caithness, in the North of Scotland. We have also instigated the establishment of the Highlands and Islands Co-working Association, linking similar spaces across the area so that founders can share information, knowledge, experience, and also cross-refer clients to each other.

The result

We have around 50 members in the space, around 20 of whom use the space on a regular (weekly or more frequent) basis. A typical day sees around 10-15 people in the space. Our meeting rooms are used by others on a weekly basis, and we also provide hot-desking for around 100 non-members a year – digital nomads who find themselves in the area needing a quality work-space for anything from a day to a month.

Website link

Find out more about the Impact Hub Inverness on their website:
https://inverness.impacthub.net/