

**Good Jobs Charter Initial Consultation and Survey
Draft Response**

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Good Jobs Charter initial consultation and survey.

We would refer the Department to the **Council's response to the Good Jobs Employment Rights Bill** (September 2024) which outlined the Council's view that providing secure work with fair pay and secure contracts, that offer flexibility enabling the diversity of the labour market to work while also empowering employees are key components of good work and driving inclusive growth - offering a sustained route to a secure income which will help to move people out of poverty. This is also at the heart of the Belfast Agenda, the city's community plan.

As an early adopter the Department will be familiar with the Council's **Belfast Business Promise** (BBP) initiative, which has been informed by the Greater Manchester Good Jobs Charter and developed with businesses and subject matter experts including the Labour Relations Agency. The BBP has been operating since 2024 and with over 80 organisations signed up (almost half of those are from the private sector), it has undergone a period of review to enable us to scale and sustain through improving operational delivery and impact¹. The purpose of the BBP is:

To work with employers to change behaviours to support a more sustainable thriving local economy by:

- *Providing a framework to improve and recognise good employment and inclusive business practices.*
- *Helping to deliver more good jobs with opportunities for people to progress and develop.*
- *Engaging with employers and partners to provide more wrap around support to help businesses to thrive, grow and scale.*
- *Building a strong business base and network, committed to supporting the city's inclusive growth ambitions – leaving no one behind.*

We would endorse a **co-design design approach** as proposed and would **recommend that those with practical experience of developing and delivering similar models are included** in this process, alongside employer and trade union representative bodies and subject matter experts.

Belfast City Council would welcome the opportunity to share the local learning and practical experience to inform the development of the regional approach to the design, development and delivery of a Good Jobs Charter.

Council officers have worked closely with the Labour Relations Agency on the BBP and to inform the Good Jobs guidance; however, it will be important to take account of the local

¹ BCC Strategic Policy & Resources Committee Report (March 2026) – [BBP Next Steps](#)

employer base and existing place-based structures (e.g. CPP, LEP, LMP) to support implementation options. As agreed at the Council's City Growth & Regeneration Committee (March 2026) the Council is committed to supporting efforts to create good jobs and a pipeline of workers for Good Jobs, connecting to the Labour Market Partnership.

Charter Options

We note that the aim of the Charter is to increase the number of good jobs in the economy and this would form the key consideration in selecting a preferred delivery option. Taking on board the experience of the BBP, we would make the following brief comments in relation to each of the options.

Option 1 – A good practice framework would provide and standardise expectations of what constitutes a good job, providing an awareness raising and education model which may provide an opportunity to tailor to specific industry sectors. While deliverable within a modest budget, it would require education, promotion and communications budget. However, it risks being perceived as a largely paper-exercise if there is no mechanism to track or report on the organisations meeting the standards. As proposed, this may have limited impact on increasing the number of good jobs.

Option 2 – A code of practice would provide a consistent, minimum standard of practice in relation to good jobs. Whilst this may lead to an increase in the number of good jobs, we would urge early consideration be given to putting in place the supports for employers to ensure they are aware of the requirements and that support is available in the preparation for implementation. This will be particularly important for the large proportion of SMEs in the local economy. As 87% of Belfast businesses have less than 50 employees² there are a significant number of businesses that are likely to need support, albeit micro-organisations may be exempt from some requirements. This will be reflected across Council areas. In addition, it may be necessary to consider specific support for third sector organisations, particularly given their reliance on grant funding.

Option 3 – A charter assessment and accreditation scheme, similar to the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) scheme, would provide a consistent mechanism to support organisations to improve behaviours and increase the number of good jobs. Proportionality will be key to the design and delivery. While this option would require more resource to deliver and administer, relevant costings for the NI context and Charter design model would be required to enable fuller assessment. As is the case with the GMCA scheme, a tiered approach to the Charter design could provide a means to promote understanding and awareness through a framework of good practice amongst organisations about the benefits of good jobs (as outlined in option 1), while also offering a route to progress and meet the standards through an accreditation process. This not only offers reputational benefits for individual businesses, as well as supporting employees and reinforcing the role of good jobs in the economy.

² BRES 2025

We would remind the Department of the **procurement and commissioning power** of the public sector in creating behaviour change amongst its supply chain where the Good Jobs Charter and characteristics could be included in social value requirements, providing an additional lever to increase the number of good jobs in the economy. Several Belfast based anchor organisations, alongside the Council, have already committed to the Belfast Business Promise, providing a sound foundation and community of practice to support good jobs and inclusive practices. This includes the city's two universities, Belfast Harbour, Translink, Belfast Metropolitan College. The role that funding and funders can play in leveraging good jobs should also be considered, particularly in the current funding climate.

The local economy continues to face significant challenges with persistent high levels of economic inactivity and global stresses and shocks that have increased the cost of doing business. This is combined with an increasing need to encourage innovation, collaboration and adaptability to support a more sustainable and resilient economy.

Around 42% of Belfast residents (aged over 16 years) are employed in low paid occupations³, such as hospitality, retail, childcare etc. While creating good jobs within these sectors offers the greatest impact and recognises the vital role they play in the local economy, it is likely to be challenging in the current climate. The BBP has secured the commitment from a small number of organisations from these sectors and there is scope to learn from their experience and approach. It may therefore be worth factoring in a targeted or sectoral approach to the co-design phase. Based on the BBP experience, Belfast City Council would be keen to explore this further in order to maximise impact and support organisations.

Characteristics of Good Jobs

The **Belfast Business Promise pledges** are available at [Belfast Business Promise](#) and are accompanied by a series of commitments – behaviours organisations are expected to meet. These characteristics of good practice were agreed by Council following a significant period of co-development and engagement with businesses and subject matter experts. As previously noted, this goes beyond good jobs to set out standards and characteristics relating to:

- Good Jobs - Providing fair pay (Real Living Wage) and secure contracts
- Promoting inclusive recruitment practices and pathways into and progression in employment
- Supporting the local and social economy through social value procurement
- Protecting the environment and climate considerations
- Working in partnership with the local community.

The Department may already be familiar with the best practice resources/guides available through the [Inclusive Growth Network](#) (now [Growth and Reform Network](#)) which provide valuable resources, including case studies, that would support for the co-design process.

³ Based on Census 2021 employment status.

Within this context, the co-design approach forms a critical step in taking forward a meaningful Good Jobs Charter, and we would encourage consideration of a costed and phased approach being built in, to ensure preparations and support are available at an early stage and that employers are aware of the requirements.