



Institute for the
Future of Work

Spotlight Report

Good Work Monitor Spotlight

Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly

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Cornwall lockup



University of Exeter
Cornwall



About this Report

IFOW's series of Spotlight Reports have been developed to take our national-level research and offer in-depth analyses at a regional level.

Our **Good Work Monitor** aggregates data across six dimensions on '**good work**' from all 203 local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales.

Catalysed by this work, and with focused data analysis provided by IFOW's Good Work Monitor team, **this Spotlight report has been produced by expert partners based in Cornwall** to offer a deep dive into the particular regional opportunities and challenges for the development of good work across Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

If you would be interested in a Spotlight Report for your region, please do contact team@ifow.org

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Institute for the Future of Work

The Institute for the Future of Work is an independent research and development institute exploring how new technologies are transforming work and working lives. We develop practical solutions to promote people's future wellbeing and prosperity.

Co-founded by former employment barrister Anna Thomas, Nobel prize-winning economist Professor Sir Christopher Pissarides and technologist Naomi Climer CBE, we work at the intersection of government, industry and civil society to shape a fairer future through better work.

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Executive Summary

Cornwall faces structural economic challenges due to its peripherality, seasonal economy, and reliance on small businesses. These factors contribute to lower wages, job insecurity, and limited career progression. However, emerging industries such as renewable energy, space technology, and sustainable mining present opportunities to transform the employment landscape. We incorporate the findings of the [Good Work Monitor](#) (GWM) framework to assess employment quality and highlight key areas for improvement, including financial security, job stability, skills development, and workplace culture. This report integrates quantitative data from the GWM with qualitative insights from interviews and business case studies carried out in our research.

To summarise:

- **Good work is more than employment.** It is work that promotes dignity, autonomy and equality; work that has fair pay and conditions; work where people are properly supported to develop their talents and have a sense of community.
- Our report underscores the need for a regional strategy to enhance job quality while addressing economic frictions and employment precarity.
- It highlights the potential relevance of voluntary standards at a subnational level for assisting businesses with the implementation of new government legislation as well as promoting practices that go beyond the baseline expectations encoded in the Employment Rights Bill and other regulation.
- In particular, it focuses on ongoing efforts towards a **Good Work Charter for Cornwall**.

Some key insights from our report include:

- Cornwall faces unique economic challenges due to its peripheral location, reliance on seasonal industries, and a high proportion of small businesses.
- Structural issues include lower wages, job insecurity, skills gaps, poor housing and transport links, and limited career progression.
- Economic disparities compared to cities are exacerbated by industry composition, weak infrastructure, and investment limitations.
- Despite challenges, emerging sectors such as renewable energy, space technology, and sustainable mining offer new employment opportunities.

Findings from the Good Work Monitor (GWM)

- Cornwall's employment quality has improved over the past decade, but challenges remain in pay, job security, and career progression.
- Labour market access, job autonomy, and pay conditions are key indicators measured.
- Employment rates have risen, but many jobs remain low-paid and seasonal.
- Cornwall's weekly median pay is lower than the national average, largely due to sector composition and a high prevalence of small businesses.
- New industries (space technology, lithium extraction) are contributing to wage growth but remain in early development stages.
- Job satisfaction and work-life balance show mixed trends, with some improvements in flexible work but ongoing concerns in hospitality and seasonal sectors.

Findings and Case Studies from the Good Work Project

- Cornish businesses are adopting good work practices to improve employment stability (in terms of both recruitment and retention) and worker health and well-being to ensure those who face challenges can remain in employment and participate actively in the labour market.
- Flexible working models (hybrid work, four-day workweeks) are being piloted but face obvious obstacles in industries with rigid schedules.
- Businesses are addressing seasonal employment instability by offering longer-term contracts.
- Other innovations, the linkage of wages to inflation, the development of career pathways through partnerships with educational institutions, green skills training, and profit-sharing schemes (either internally or via employee ownership trusts) to align employee success with business performance.

Challenges to Good Work Implementation

- High housing costs, weak public transport, and skills mismatches hinder workforce retention and development, which compound underpinning issues with economic inactivity and do not enable a fundamental shift in the age profile of Cornwall's workforce.
- Small businesses struggle to meet accreditation costs and resource accreditation with adequate time (e.g., Living Wage Foundation, B Corp certification), and plenty of companies soldier on trying to do the right thing without accreditation via one of these schemes.
- Fear of doing the wrong thing can prevent firms from trying to do the right thing; and there is often a lack of clarity about the evolving regulatory environment and the forms of support provided in a fragmented funding landscape. There is a need for more support to understand, adapt to and benefit from recent policy shifts.
- SMEs often lack the capacity to compete for public-sector contracts, limiting job security improvements and preventing upgrading through procurement policies.
- Some industries resist flexible work and pay equity reforms due to cost, time constraints, and operational challenges, and therefore require comprehensive leadership buy-in.

Recommendations for Advancing Good Work

Business Strategies:

- Expand outcome-based work models to increase job autonomy and engagement.
- Implement inflation-linked pay reviews, bonuses, and profit-sharing to enhance financial security.
- Develop multi-role contracts to provide stability for seasonal workers.
- Partner with education providers to deliver tailored upskilling and apprenticeship programs.

Policy & Structural Interventions:

- Invest in affordable housing to support workforce retention.
- Expand public transport access to improve mobility for workers.
- Introduce regional wage guarantees or subsidies for businesses implementing good work practices.

Community & Sector Collaboration:

- Strengthen regional networks for knowledge-sharing and mentorship.
- Scale up business support organisations to assist SMEs in adopting good work models.
- Encourage public-private partnerships to fund workforce development in emerging industries.

A Good Work Charter for Cornwall

- Support a Good Work Charter (or a charter-like ‘Pledge’ scheme) as an accessible alternative to cost-prohibitive certifications, amplifying the practices of companies that are doing the right thing outside established accreditation pathways.
- Recognising the crucial role that different kinds of employers play in promoting the wellbeing and upskilling of Cornwall’s workforce, such a charter could look to take a staged approach to compliance that encourages and assists businesses starting out from distinct positions and conditions to achieve good work goals and outcomes within the context of recent legislative changes.
- There should be specific goals or approaches for specific sectors in light of the very different labour and product market conditions and challenges that firms within Cornwall’s fragmented economy face; this also requires a coherent account of the potential benefits that firms in different sectors could receive from being part of the scheme.
- A pragmatic approach is needed. Stages or levels of commitment would enable companies to jump onto the good work journey at different points depending on their particular market position or other factors.
- Using procurement and other policy levers, this could provide a flexible, scalable approach to improving job quality across sectors through a set of values and voluntary standards at the subnational level to complement and promote the understanding and implementation of new national legislation.

Conclusion

- Cornwall has made progress in implementing good work principles, but structural challenges must be addressed to ensure equitable economic growth and continued implementation.
- Businesses, policymakers, and community organisations must work together to create a resilient and inclusive employment landscape with a multi-causal approach in mind.
- Sustained investment in infrastructure, housing, and skills development will be critical in shaping Cornwall’s future workforce and improving work quality.
- With collaborative efforts and strategic interventions, Cornwall can establish itself as a leader in good work practices for peripheral economies across the UK.
- Ultimately, many of the challenges to good work in Cornwall are downstream of seasonal and contingent market conditions that produce low-margin business models with little capacity to adapt to the demands and requirements of better employment.
- In this respect, the best driver of good work will be a joined-up approach to economic design underpinned by the high-growth industries of the future and higher-value upgrades to Cornwall’s existing sectors. Cornwall Council’s Good Growth Plan provides a roadmap for the diversification required in this respect.

1. Introduction: Cornwall and the Challenges of Good Work in Peripheralised Economies

Cornwall, as a peripheral region in the United Kingdom, faces unique challenges in fostering good work. Its geographical remoteness, reliance on seasonal industries such as tourism, and a high prevalence of small and micro-enterprises often translate to economic vulnerabilities and limits. Cornwall has historically low rates of unionisation and membership of other civic institutions supporting the conditions for good work. The region has experienced lower-than-average pay, limited career progression opportunities, and a reliance on part-time or insecure work. Cornwall also faces substantial issues related to economic inactivity, driven by health barriers and long-term sickness, and an ageing workforce that is ill-prepared for the demands of the future workplace. Such challenges are compounded by barriers to accessing affordable housing, limited public transport infrastructure, and skills gaps that constrain workforce mobility and development.

Peripheral regions like Cornwall often experience economic disparities compared to urban centres. The region's reliance on industries with traditionally low margins exacerbates these inequalities, as businesses in sectors such as hospitality and food production struggle to offer competitive wages and stable contracts. Furthermore, Cornwall's distance from major metropolitan areas limits its integration into national and international economic networks, reducing access to investment, skilled labour, and growth opportunities. These challenges underline the importance of tailored interventions to enhance the quality of work in peripheralised economies like Cornwall's.

Despite many challenges, Cornwall's economy is increasingly bolstered by resilience and innovation. Emerging sectors, such as renewable energy, space technology, and sustainable mining, provide opportunities to address structural weaknesses and create high-quality jobs with opportunities for upskilling and progression. By leveraging these industries and fostering collaboration between businesses, policymakers, and educational institutions, Cornwall can build a more inclusive, ethical and sustainable economy. The concept of good work is central to these efforts. [Good work](#), as defined by the Institute for the Future of Work (IFOW), encompasses employment that promotes dignity, autonomy, and equality while offering fair pay and conditions, opportunities for skills development, and a sense of community. This multi-dimensional construct reflects a holistic approach to employment, recognising the role of good work in enabling the flourishing of individuals, communities and places. Good work is thus not just about economic benefits, but also about fostering wellbeing, inclusion and sustainability.

The structural challenges faced by Cornwall in achieving good work must be understood within the broader context of economic frictions that impede workforce transitions and regional economic resilience. The major, three-year [Pissarides Review into the Future of Work and Wellbeing](#) - funded by the Nuffield Foundation and run by IFOW - elucidates that economic activity is often uncoordinated, costly, and hindered by geographic, informational, and institutional frictions. For Cornwall, these frictions manifest in skills mismatches, weak infrastructure links, and limited access to investment for SMEs. The Review stresses the necessity of place-based approaches to overcome these challenges and demonstrates that national policy interventions often fail to address the unique needs of peripheral regions. Cornwall's ongoing economic

transition, particularly through numerous emerging industries, provides an opportunity to reconfigure the local Cornish labour market in ways that promote resilience for the region.




However, without strategic interventions to reduce these economic frictions—such as better workforce mobility, targeted skills development, and employer incentives for retention—many workers in the region remain locked in low-pay, insecure, and seasonal employment. We therefore underscore the need for an integrated Good Work strategy that aligns business growth with sustainable workforce development, ensuring that Cornwall’s economic diversification does not merely replicate past patterns of labour market segmentation that have emerged in other peripheral regions. Policy efforts should focus on enabling worker agency and adaptability, particularly through lifelong learning, upskilling programs, and sector-wide job quality commitments.

A focus on access to good work in Cornwall invites the addressing of structural challenges, as well as proactive efforts to embed good work principles into business practices, ensuring that jobs are secure, fulfilling, and aligned with broader social and environmental goals. Initiatives such as Living Wage Foundation certification, B Corp accreditation, and regional Good Work Charters such as the Manchester and Midlands Charters, provide valuable frameworks for achieving these aims, though their accessibility and applicability vary across different economic contexts. In Cornwall, the journey toward good work involves balancing the need for immediate interventions to address pressing issues—such as low wages and job insecurity—with long-term strategies to foster sustainable growth and professionalisation in the absence of established actors like trades unions. This report explores the challenges and opportunities facing Cornwall in its pursuit of good work, presenting both quantitative insights from the Good Work Monitor and qualitative findings from interviews and roundtables at the University of Exeter in Cornwall. These perspectives provide a comprehensive understanding of how good work can be achieved in Cornwall, highlighting pathways for progress and the need for collective action.

This report is organised to provide a comprehensive exploration of the challenges and opportunities for advancing good work in Cornwall. Following this introduction, the Good Work Monitor is introduced as a tool for assessing employment quality at the sub-regional level, with key findings that establish a foundation for understanding Cornwall’s unique economic conditions. The Key Findings section presents thematically organised, detailed insights from interviews, roundtables, and qualitative data. The findings include a focus on employment quality, pay and financial security, skills development, workplace culture, economic growth, and community impact. Next, we propose a Good Work Toolkit containing recommendations and strategies for businesses and policymakers, highlighting innovative approaches to fostering good work in Cornwall. Finally, the report concludes with a forward-looking discussion on the potential role of regional initiatives, such as Good Work Charters, to address persistent barriers and support inclusive, sustainable economic growth.

2. Introducing the Good Work Monitor

Published annually by IFOW, the [Good Work Monitor](#) is the first holistic measure of the availability of good work across the country. Government, industry and the public should prioritise and value the creation of future good work; to achieve this, it is vital to have a clear and accurate measure of the sub-regional geography of good work. It is necessary to map access to good work against local conditions and impacts to develop practical policy initiatives. Building on a growing body of research on work quality, including by partners at the Health Foundation, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, RSA, Carnegie Trust and the CIPD, IFOW developed the Good Work Monitor. As well as providing a framework, the Monitor can be used as a benchmark from which to track changes over time and measure the success of policy interventions and institutions aimed at improving access to good work. IFOW has worked with researchers from University College London and Opinium to rigorously select, assess and compile the data that underpins the monitor.

Good Work Monitor		
Indicator Group	Variables used	Indicator
 Labour Market Access	Unemployment Rate	Employment Score
	Labour Force Participation (Ages 16-64)	Economic Activity Score
 Work Status and Autonomy	% in 'Routine' Work	De-Routinisation ('Autonomy') Score
	% in Professional / Managerial Occupations	Professional Occupation Score, taken by the percentage of those in Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) 1, 2 and 3X
 Pay and Conditions	Median Pay indexed to regional price levels	Median Weekly Pay Score
	% population with 'Satisfactory Hours'	Satisfactory Hours Score

The monitor comprises six indicators across three domains: labour market access, status and autonomy, and pay and conditions. The six indicators – Employment, Economic Activity, De-Routinisation, Professional Occupation, Median Weekly Pay and Satisfactory Hours – were selected by reference to IFOW's Good Work Charter, based on a review of relevant academic and policy literature, and subject to data quality and availability. Data was collected for 119 unitary authorities and counties across England in 2019 and 202 across England, Scotland and Wales in 2022, 2023 and 2024 Time Series. Objective measures, which reflect real-world choices and outcomes, were preferred to capture persistent trends within local areas at an aggregate level, and for consistency. London has been excluded as wide-scale commuting and outliers' results mean that the relationship between work, socioeconomic conditions and health in the capital warrants a separate analysis.

Despite the wealth of data the monitor draws on, it does not cover all dimensions of job quality which pertain to the Good Work Charter, particularly around health and safety, or voice and representation. This is due to the absence of quality statistics on these issues. Addressing this deficit in data will be important to developing a deeper understanding of good work in the future. IFOW will refine and update the monitor as new data becomes available, producing a Good Work Monitor series to map changes over time. The Good Work Monitor is a new tool designed for policymakers to understand local strengths and weaknesses and to tailor policy responses to local needs.

Measuring Good Work: Key Methodological Considerations

Widespread access to high-quality work is an important sign of an economy performing well. It is valuable both intrinsically, and instrumentally as it contributes to the health and wellbeing of the population. The Good Work Monitor measures the availability of good work across county and unitary authorities in England. Although there have been several important contributions to identifying and quantifying the availability of good work across larger regional geographies and economic sectors, this Monitor is the first to do so at a detailed sub-regional geographic level. The following outlines some important methodological characteristics of the Good Work Monitor, and a list of full indicators and the justification for their inclusion.

1. Job-Level vs. Area-Level Data

Assessing whether an individual job is good or bad is distinct from assessing the availability of good work in a geographic area or an economic sector. Measuring the quality of an individual job requires collecting information about the features of that job and assessing it against other jobs to understand its relative merits and disadvantages. In some cases, it is possible to aggregate this individual or job-level data to calculate the proportion of 'good jobs' within a geographic area of interest. However, segmenting this data at granular geographic (or sectoral) level requires large sample sizes to ensure that there are enough individuals within each locality for the data to be truly representative. The lack of wide-scale individual or job-level data necessitates an alternative approach.

2. The Components of Job Quality

Over the past few years, there have been several important and significant research contributions to understanding job quality at a conceptual level. A detailed literature review, undertaken by the Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development in 2017 highlighted a consensus around pay and rewards, stable or predictable employment terms, intrinsic job characteristics such as autonomy and variety, health and safety at work, good work/life balance and representation/voice. This basic structure was echoed by the Job Quality Working Group set up by the Carnegie Trust in partnership with the Royal Society of Arts, which in 2018 released a set of survey questions to assess individual job quality. Although these survey questions have not yet been adopted wholesale into national statistics collection, the structure is valuable in clarifying thinking about how to identify good jobs. Following a review of available routinely collected data available at the chosen geographic level of county / unitary authorities, it was decided that the Good Work Monitor would incorporate indicators from three core groups: labour market access, autonomy and job status, and pay and terms. Job autonomy and status are widely accepted as important intrinsic characteristics of a job, i.e. what the job is, whereas pay and conditions are important characteristics of job design.

The focus on the availability of good work has also meant that it is relevant to include features of the labour market that extend beyond job quality, such as the unemployment rate. One purpose of this research is to understand the variation in likelihood that people can get a good job in different parts of the country. To take an extreme example, one can imagine a hypothetical area in which there are only a very small number of jobs available, but each one is extremely highly paid with excellent conditions. Without considering unemployment, this area would score very highly for job quality, but this score would not reflect the lower likelihood of a given person in that area securing a good job.

Some areas of job quality are omitted in the Good Work Monitor due to various issues with data availability. Work-life balance, although important, is not included as it is difficult to assess directly from routinely collected aggregate data. For instance, "total hours worked" statistics might reflect individual preferences as opposed to features of the work itself. Workplace health and safety is omitted due to (a) relatively low general levels of workplace injury and (b) what

persistent geographical variation there is in workplace injury statistics is largely driven by industry-based risk factors, which are captured elsewhere in the Monitor. Finally, there is a general lack of data on workplace voice and representation at the required geographic level, so this aspect of job quality is not included.

3. Weighting Indicators

A separate issue relating to measuring job quality is the issue of weighting - the relative importance of different aspects of a job to its overall quality. Whereas there has been some research into identifying how much workers value different aspects of job quality, it is unclear how these weights vary from person to person, and how they ought to be applied at an aggregate level. Reflecting best practice in light of available data, the Good Work Monitor does not assign weights to individual indicators. Objective vs Subjective Indicators A critical consideration for measuring job quality at both an individual and aggregate level is the distinction between subjective and objective indicators. To draw out this contrast, consider the difference between evaluating two jobs by asking workers “Do you feel like you are paid well?” (subjective) versus asking “What is your annual salary?” (objective). It is important to note that a job that performs well on objective measures, such as having relatively high pay, might perform poorly on a similar subjective evaluation of the role. There is no definitive ‘right’ answer as to whether subjective or objective indicators give a more complete picture of job quality. However, there is an emerging viewpoint that a blend of both subjective and objective indicators is best for capturing the rich and nuanced dimensions of work quality for individuals. Recent studies of individual-level ‘job quality indicators’ have typically incorporated both types, but with a general balance towards objective indicators.

The approach taken here has been to use, wherever adequate data is available, objective indicators. The reason for this is that the Good Work Monitor is designed to capture persistent trends about the availability of good work within local areas at an aggregate level. Objective indicators of work quality more often reflect broader economic, social and legislative trends and are less likely to vary unpredictably due to sampling changes or other factors not pertaining to changes in the nature of the job itself. Further, objective data is more often routinely collected through national surveys such as the Labour Force Survey, the Annual Population Survey and the Business and Employment Register Survey among others. These national surveys also typically have sample sizes large enough to report estimates at the County / Unitary Authority level, enabling a more detailed geographic picture of work.

Good Work Time Series for Cornwall 2024: Upward Trend in GWM Score

Cornwall’s Good Work Monitor (GWM) score has exhibited an upward trend over the past decade, reflecting improvements in employment quality, economic activity, and job satisfaction. However, notable declines in 2012 and 2015 can be attributed to both national economic conditions and specific local factors.

National Economic Context:

2012: The UK was emerging from the 2008 financial crisis, with austerity measures impacting public spending and economic growth. These national challenges likely affected Cornwall’s local economy, leading to reduced employment opportunities and wage stagnation.

2015: While the national economy showed signs of recovery, the benefits were unevenly distributed. Regions like Cornwall, with economies reliant on specific sectors, may have experienced slower growth, impacting local employment conditions.

Figure 1: British Local Authorities GWM scores 2009-22

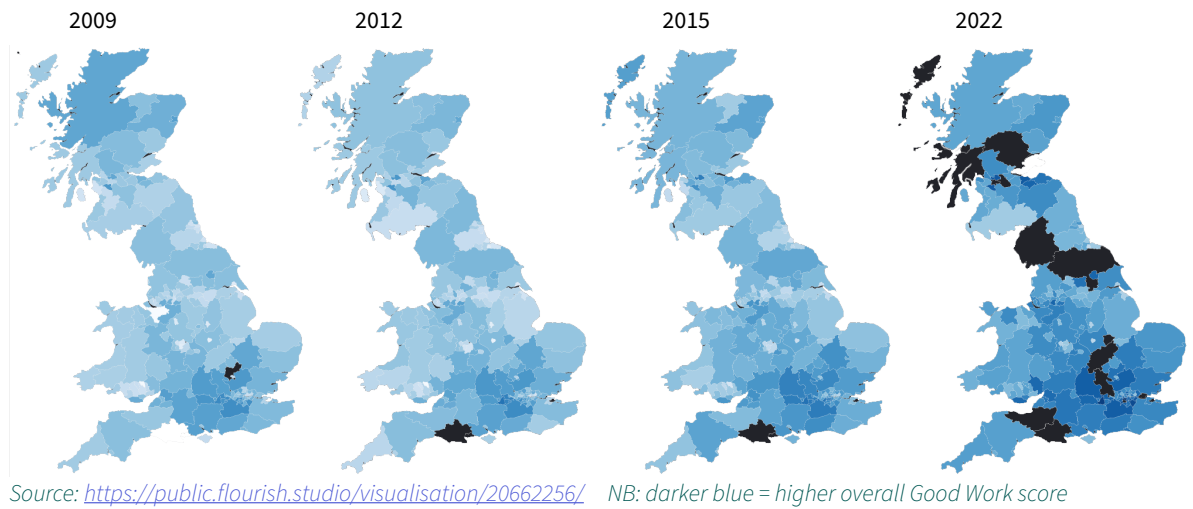


Figure 2: Cornwall GWM scores 2009-22

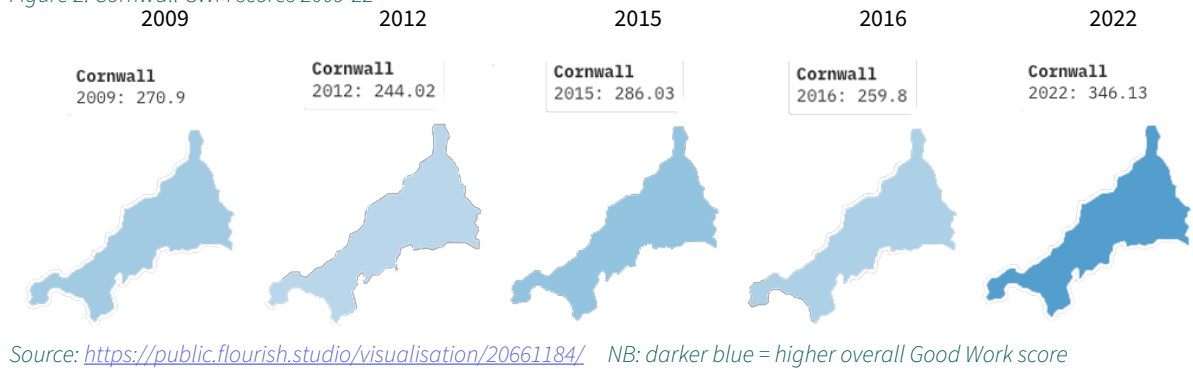


Figure 3: Cornwall GWM total scores 2009-22

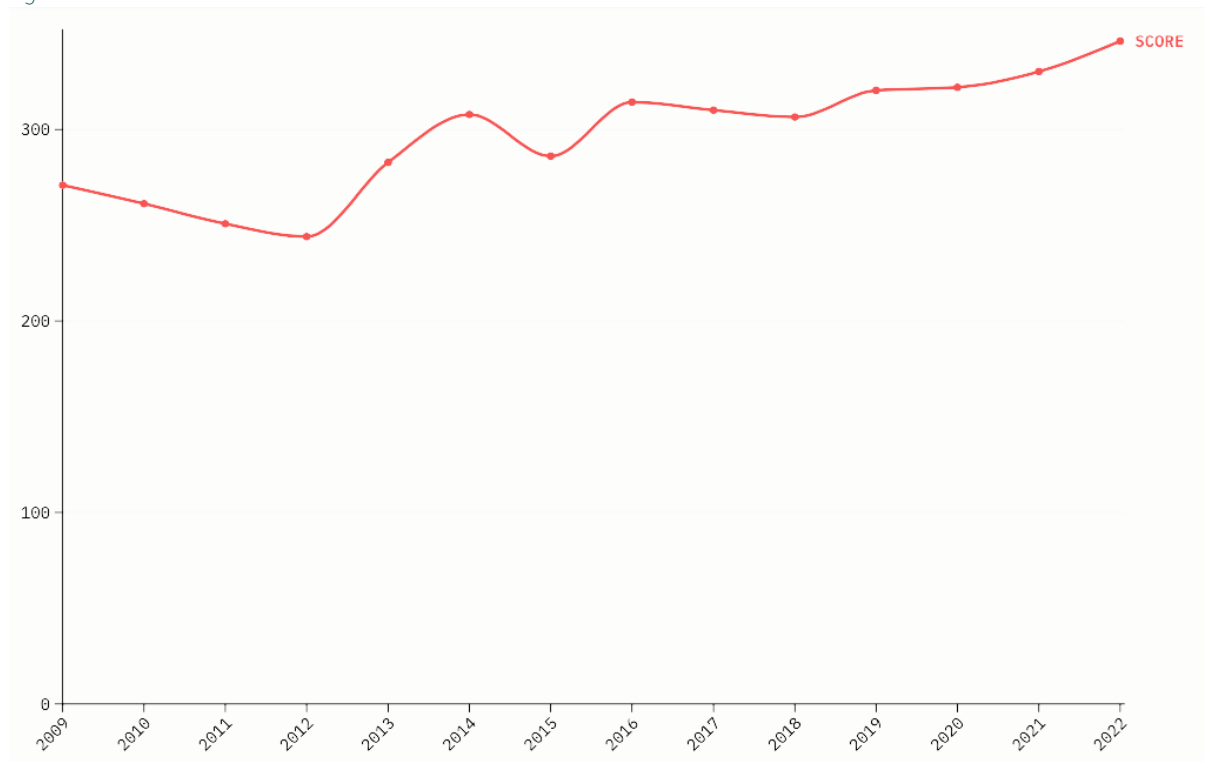
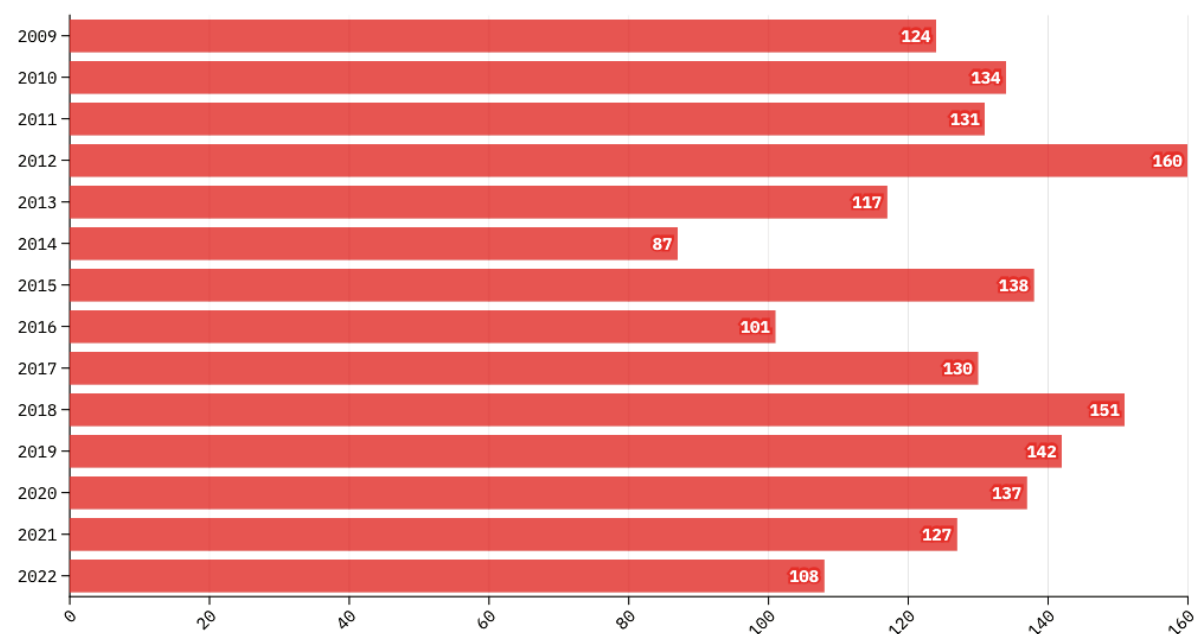


Figure 4: Cornwall ranking 2009-2022



Source: <https://public.flourish.studio/visualisation/20661816/>

Local Factors Influencing GWM Scores

Economic Structure: The structure of the Cornish economy is weighted towards low-margin sectors whose market conditions create obstacles for the achievement of good work. Whilst Cornwall's economy has a higher percentage of jobs in sectors like mining and quarrying (0.4%) compared to the UK average (0.2%) (Economics Observatory), the long and protracted decline of such industries has left no durable replacement although the green transition creates potential for reindustrialisation that may produce higher-value sectors and jobs.

Business Demographics: In 2015, there were 23,145 registered enterprises in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, an increase from previous years (Cornwall Growth Programme). However, many of these businesses are small-scale, which may offer lower wages and less job security, affecting overall employment quality.

Deprivation Levels: The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) in 2015 ranked Cornwall 68th out of 326 local authority areas, indicating significant deprivation (Cornwall Council). High deprivation levels can correlate with lower GWM scores due to limited access to quality employment and education.

Recovery and Upward Trend Post-2015

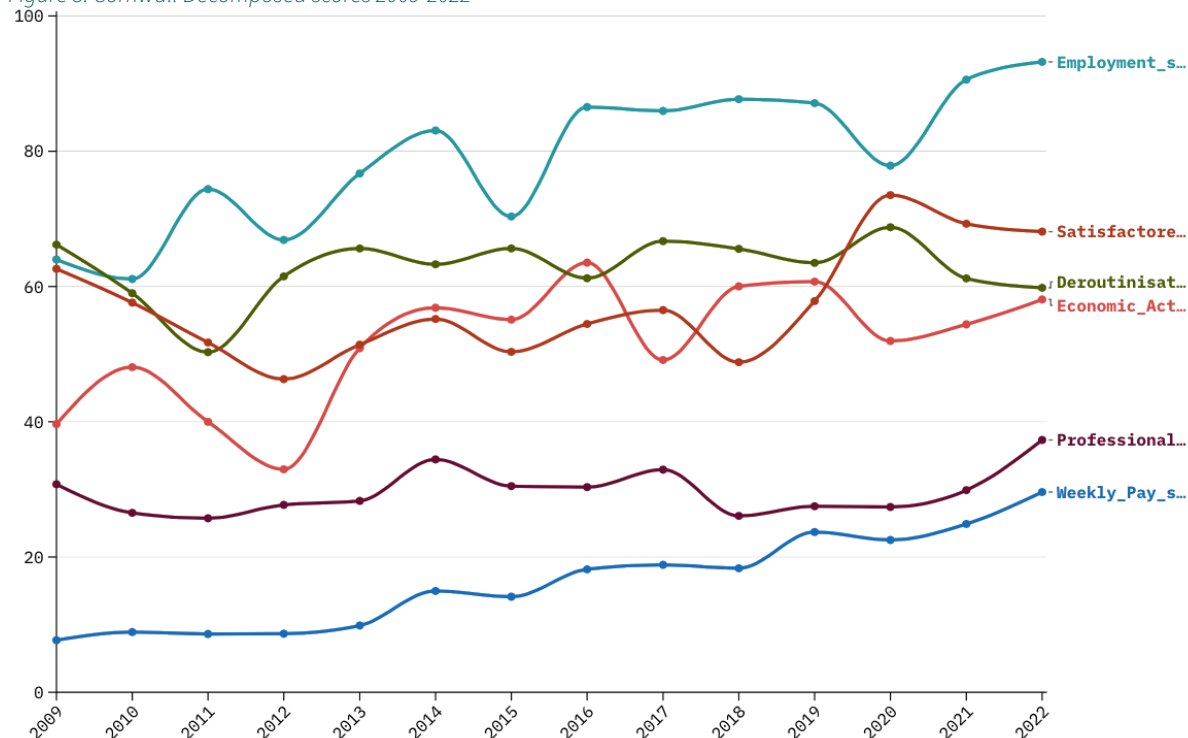
Economic Diversification: Post-2015, Cornwall has focused on diversifying its economy, investing in sectors like renewable energy and technology, leading to job creation and improved employment conditions.

Infrastructure Investments: Enhanced infrastructure, including transportation and digital connectivity, has attracted businesses and boosted economic activity.

Educational Initiatives: Programs aimed at upskilling the workforce have increased employability and access to higher-quality jobs.

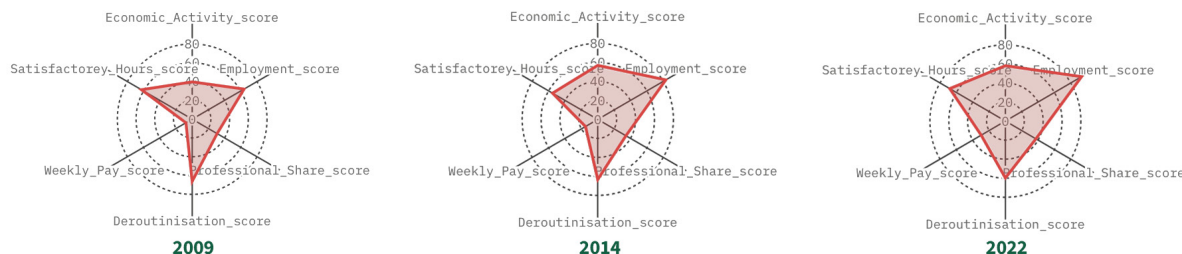
Decomposed scores

Figure 5: Cornwall Decomposed scores 2009-2022



Source: <https://public.flourish.studio/visualisation/20661129/>

Figure 6: Cornwall spider graphs 2009-2022



Source: <https://public.flourish.studio/visualisation/20660566/>

1. Employment and Satisfactory Hours Trends

Cornwall's relative success in employment rates and satisfactory working hours over the years suggests ongoing local economic initiatives that are improving job availability and work-life balance.

These improvements align with regional economic development plans and efforts to attract businesses or promote industries such as renewable energy and sustainable tourism.

2. Low Weekly Median Pay, but Upward Trend

Despite improvements, Cornwall's weekly median pay remains substantially low compared to other local authorities in Britain. There are several reasons for this:

Industry Composition: Cornwall's economy heavily relies on sectors like tourism, agriculture, and seasonal work, which traditionally offer lower wages. Even with employment stability, these sectors do not contribute significantly to wage growth.

Small-Scale Enterprises: Cornwall has a higher proportion of small and micro-enterprises. These businesses often lack the capacity to offer competitive wages compared to larger firms in urban centres.

Limited High-Skilled Jobs: While employment levels are good, Cornwall may have fewer opportunities for high-paying, professional roles compared to urban and industrial regions. This affects the overall median pay in the region. The upward trend in Cornwall's median pay score reflects a relative improvement when benchmarked against other lower-paid regions in Britain.

Comparison Against Similar Regions: Since Cornwall is compared against similarly low-income areas, incremental improvements in median pay appear significant. However, these gains may be less meaningful when viewed on a national scale or compared to regions like London or the South East.

Potential new industries driving the trend: The space sector, centred around Spaceport Cornwall, focuses on satellite launches and space innovation, positioning the region as a hub for aerospace technology. Additionally, the extraction of lithium and other critical minerals, essential for renewable energy and electric vehicles, contributes to an increasing median wage.

3. Satisfactory Hours Downward Trends

After 2020, satisfactory hours in Cornwall might have declined due to the rise of gig and part-time jobs, particularly in seasonal sectors like tourism and agriculture. These roles often lack predictable hours, leading to dissatisfaction. Additionally, small businesses facing economic pressures may reduce employee hours, while a mismatch between job availability and workers' preferences for flexibility or stability can exacerbate the issue.

4. De-routinisation of professions falls after 2020 but Professional jobs increase.

Routine jobs have persisted in Cornwall after 2020 possibly due to the region's reliance on sectors like agriculture, food production, and tourism, which require manual, repetitive tasks that are less easily automated. Additionally, the economic disruptions from Brexit and the pandemic have reinforced the demand for essential, lower-skilled roles in these industries, as they support local supply chains and seasonal employment. However, new industrial possibilities like the space industry and lithium extraction might potentially drive the share of professional jobs higher.

3. Key Findings from Qualitative Study

The Good Work Monitor provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the availability and quality of work at a sub-regional level, offering valuable insights into Cornwall's strengths and areas for improvement. By focusing on labour market access, job autonomy, and pay and conditions, the Monitor equips policymakers and businesses with the tools needed to identify challenges and tailor interventions effectively. While the Monitor highlights persistent issues such as low pay and job insecurity, it also underscores opportunities for growth and innovation in emerging sectors and sustainable practices. This quantitative approach provides a strong foundation for exploring the qualitative findings from our interviews and roundtables, which provide deeper insights into the lived experiences of workers and businesses in Cornwall.

The findings in this section are structured around the core themes of the Good Work Monitor (GWM), which evaluates employment quality through measurable aspects such as financial security, skills development, and satisfactory working hours. These themes are further enriched with qualitative insights gathered during this project, including interviews with businesses across Cornwall, stakeholder conversations, and roundtable discussions. Together, the findings explore key areas such as employment stability, pay and financial security, opportunities for skills development and career progression, the quality of workplace culture, economic growth and professionalisation, environmental sustainability, and the broader social value businesses bring to their communities.

The businesses and organisations involved span various sectors, from tourism and manufacturing to social enterprises and sustainability-driven initiatives. While there are clear signs of progress towards implementing Good Work practices in Cornwall, persistent challenges remain, particularly around financial constraints, seasonal employment, and skills shortages.

By presenting examples of flexible working, ethical pay commitments, workforce development, and innovative business strategies, this section highlights how Cornish businesses are both responding to and shaping the local-regional labour market. The findings also underscore the importance of social and environmental sustainability, with many businesses adopting approaches that balance growth with tangible community impact. Each theme integrates the experiences and strategies of businesses to provide a comprehensive overview of how Good Work is being pursued in Cornwall, while also acknowledging the barriers that must be addressed for broader implementation.

Employment and Satisfactory Hours

We identified an increasing emphasis on employment practices that improve working conditions and create satisfactory hours for employees. There are persistent challenges related to Cornwall's reliance on low-wage, irregular, and seasonal employment, particularly in sectors like tourism, agriculture, and hospitality. Cornwall's performance on satisfactory hours remains below the national average, reflecting significant structural and systemic barriers. However, businesses across the region are taking steps to address these issues by adopting flexible working arrangements and exploring innovative approaches.

Flexible working models, such as remote working, staggered hours, and compressed schedules, are being adopted to meet both business needs and employee preferences. For example, organisations working with Smart Working Revolution are shifting their focus from time-based to outcome-based work, fostering trust between employers and employees while driving organisational performance. There is value in such practices, improving job satisfaction and

retention rates particularly in high-turnover sectors. The adoption of reduced working hours, particularly the four-day workweek, has emerged as a promising innovation for improving work-life balance. Our findings indicated that compressed hours can in some business contexts lead to greater productivity, higher employee satisfaction, and enhanced staff retention, even within small organisations. Businesses offering flexible and reduced-hour models often report lower absenteeism and higher employee engagement.

However, there are also sectoral discrepancies, where industries with fixed operational demands, such as hospitality and manufacturing, face greater difficulty implementing these practices. Barriers such as workload distribution, capacity planning, and initial cultural resistance from leadership continue to slow adoption in these sectors, but some companies we heard from have adapted to get the best of both worlds – for instance, alongside flexibility, Hiyield has some core hours that everyone works with a daily ‘stand up’ for the whole team in which blockers are raised and a member of staff nominated to remove them.

Cornish Gems – Ethical Pay and Workforce Planning

Cornish Gems, operating in the holiday rental sector, has demonstrated leadership in creating stable employment by combining Living Wage Foundation accreditation with internal operational strategies aimed at workforce predictability. Cornish Gems provides employees with greater financial stability and job security by extending contracts and reducing reliance on temporary staff. These changes have also benefited the business, which reports stronger employee engagement and reduced operating costs, highlighting the mutual advantages of prioritising ethical employment practices, stable hours, and fair pay.

Despite progress, seasonal and part-time employment remains a significant concern in Cornwall. Cornwall performs poorly in job stability metrics, with temporary contracts and irregular hours disproportionately affecting low-income workers. These employment conditions undermine job security and limit workers’ ability to access housing, plan for the future, or progress in their careers. The visitor economy is a particular site where these dynamics play out, but businesses like Classic Cottages and Cornish Gems are seeking to mitigate these challenges by offering longer-term contracts and improving workforce predictability through operational planning. Such practices align with sector-wide strategies to stabilise seasonal workforces and improve employment quality. The findings also underscore the importance of leadership in creating sustainable working practices. Our analysis highlights that organisations with strong leadership commitment to flexible working are more likely to achieve success in adopting innovative models. For example, businesses like the accountancy firm Whyfield demonstrate how the four-day week can be embedded into company culture when leaders transparently communicate the benefits and engage staff in the process. We note the importance of cultural shifts, particularly among smaller, values-driven organisations, where outcome-based work is gaining traction. However, leadership resistance remains a barrier in some sectors where fixed schedules and on-site presence are deeply entrenched, preventing businesses from fully realising the benefits of flexibility.

For many workers in Cornwall, particularly in low-wage or seasonal sectors, the lack of predictable hours remains a significant concern. Our interviews highlighted the ways in which unstable employment impacts career progression and upskilling. These issues contribute to wider disparities in job quality across the region. However, businesses are increasingly aware of the need to address these challenges. Some are exploring innovative solutions, such as guaranteed hours contracts, multi-role employment across departments, or shared workforce initiatives to provide more consistent employment opportunities throughout the year.

Businesses are increasingly aware of the need to develop tailored solutions for employment challenges, particularly those related to seasonality and part-time work. Some are exploring approaches such as multi-role contracts, where employees move between departments or businesses during off-seasons to maintain consistent employment. Others are advocating for regional initiatives that incentivise businesses to offer guaranteed minimum hours, particularly in tourism-dependent areas. The potential impact of such strategies could be to improve Cornwall's overall performance in employment quality and reduce disparities in job stability.

Whyfield – Embedding the Four-Day Workweek

Whyfield, an accountancy firm, has successfully embedded a four-day workweek without compromising pay or productivity. Leadership played a crucial role in this transition, fostering an open dialogue with employees to address potential concerns and operational needs. The company adopted a phased approach, piloting the model and gathering feedback to refine its implementation. The outcomes have been transformative: employees report improved work-life balance, higher job satisfaction, and reduced absenteeism. For the business, the model has enhanced retention and created a more motivated workforce, showcasing the feasibility of reduced hour working arrangements in professional services.

While flexible and reduced working arrangements are gaining momentum in Cornwall, their widespread adoption remains uneven across sectors. Operational and financial constraints, coupled with the structural reliance on seasonal labour, present significant barriers. Nevertheless, businesses that have successfully embraced innovative working practices are setting valuable examples for the region. These efforts demonstrate that flexible, stable, and satisfactory employment is both achievable and beneficial for long-term business sustainability and employee well-being.

Pay and Financial Security

Ensuring fair pay and improving financial security emerged as key priorities for businesses in Cornwall striving to align with Good Work standards. Findings from the Good Work Monitor (GWM) indicate that Cornwall lags behind national averages in weekly median pay, highlighting the ongoing challenges faced by employees in the region. Despite this, businesses across sectors are adopting innovative practices to address wage inequality and create more financially secure workplaces.

Low pay is a persistent issue, particularly in tourism, hospitality, agriculture, and various forms of seasonal work. Seasonal and part-time employment in these sectors exacerbates financial instability, limiting workers' ability to save, contribute to housing costs, plan for the future, or progress in their careers. Some businesses are making proactive changes in recognition of these challenges. For instance, Classic Cottages and Cornish Gems, both holiday-home rental agencies, offer longer-term contracts for seasonal staff, aiming to provide income stability and reduce reliance on short-term employment cycles. Cornish Gems has implemented operational efficiencies to stabilise workforce demand throughout the year, directly addressing the volatility of seasonal employment. Broader innovations include a growing number of businesses pursuing Living Wage Foundation accreditation to embed the Real Living Wage (RLW) into their pay structures as a baseline for fair compensation. Scaled up with the Living Wage Place Cornwall campaign, this has been supported by Cornwall Council and paying a living wage has been a condition of receiving Shared Prosperity Fund grants, across over 100 funding contracts. Businesses offering higher wages are better able to attract and retain employees, especially in competitive sectors. This approach not only improves financial security but also supports the

organisations' broader social impact goals. Most interviewed companies are actively working towards Living Wage Foundation accreditation or have already achieved it, extending fair pay principles to freelancers and contractors. These practices suggest that businesses prioritising ethical pay experience stronger workforce retention and improved morale and engagement.

Westcountry Fabrication – Linking Wages to Inflation



Westcountry Fabrication addresses the financial security of its workforce through annual inflation-linked pay reviews. This practice ensures that employee earnings remain consistent with rising living costs and safeguard purchasing power. By engaging staff in open discussions about pay and operational finances, the company fosters trust and transparency. These efforts have positioned the company as a responsible employer within the steel supply chain and is exploring schemes such as Employee Ownership to take this further.

Despite these advances, several businesses report significant barriers to formal accreditation, and we found plenty of evidence of firms trying to do the right thing for their workers without formal recognition through the available accreditation pathways. Fear of doing the wrong thing can prevent firms from trying to do the right thing, and there is often a lack of clarity about the evolving regulatory environment and the forms of support provided in a fragmented funding landscape. There is a need for more support to understand, adapt to and benefit from recent policy shifts.

Our findings reveal that small and medium-sized organisations often view certification schemes as resource-intensive and cost-prohibitive, with costs outweighing perceived benefits. Businesses such as Westcountry Fabrication emphasise demonstrating social value through tangible outputs instead. Westcountry Fabrication conducts annual salary reviews tied to inflation, ensuring competitive wages without pursuing formal accreditation. This alternative approach suggests that smaller businesses can achieve financial fairness through transparent and adaptive practices that are operated internally. The findings also highlight innovative models that enhance

financial security by linking pay to organisational success. Westcountry Fabrication is exploring an Employee Ownership Trust (EOT), which would allow employees to share in company profits and gain a participatory role in decision-making. Similarly, Agile PR integrates financial equity into its long-term strategy through plans to transition to employee ownership. These approaches reflect our findings on the role of equitable financial models in fostering workplace resilience and employee retention, epitomised in the ambitious shift to EOT status by heating engineers Blue Flame, who have been supported by Happy Business in achieving this milestone.

Such examples indicate how leadership has emerged as a critical factor in driving improvements in pay practices. We note that businesses with strong leadership commitment to fair pay often adopt forward-thinking policies, such as profit-sharing and inflation-responsive salary reviews. Roundtable discussions further revealed that leadership buy-in remains a barrier in some sectors, particularly where traditional business models dominate. Regional collaboration could play a pivotal role in addressing systemic pay-related issues. Our findings suggest that coordinated efforts between businesses, local authorities, and policymakers could amplify progress. For example, sector-specific wage guarantees or shared workforce initiatives in tourism could stabilise income for seasonal workers. These regional frameworks would address Cornwall's structural barriers to financial security, including its reliance on seasonal employment and lower-than-average wages.

St. Eval Candle Company – Sharing Success Through Bonuses

St. Eval Candle Company has adopted a profit-sharing formula for calculating employee bonuses. This model fosters a shared sense of purpose and staff have expressed a stronger connection to the business and its goals.

The GWM findings and the qualitative insights of this research highlight both progress and persistent barriers in achieving financial security in Cornwall. Businesses adopting Living Wage accreditation or exploring innovative financial models such as employee ownership set valuable examples. However, the structural challenges of low pay, irregular hours, and seasonal employment remain significant. A coordinated approach involving businesses, policymakers, and community stakeholders is essential to create a more financially secure and equitable future for Cornwall's workers. At the same time, and as other sections here make clear, good work is about more than just pay and must also bring into play other principles that both underpin and provide recognition beyond wages alone: for instance, power, productivity, purpose and progression.

Skills Development and Career Progression

Our findings highlight the importance of skills development and career progression in addressing Cornwall's workforce challenges and enabling economic growth. As highlighted by IFoW's Disruption Index Spotlight Report on Cornwall & the Isles of Scilly, the region has made progress in promoting adult education and technical training, but barriers persist, particularly in access to higher education and clear progression pathways in certain industries. Cornish businesses are adopting innovative approaches to workforce development, tailoring their strategies to meet the demands of both traditional and emerging industries. Businesses in technology, manufacturing, and renewable energy sectors have launched partnerships with local educational institutions to bridge regional skills gaps. These collaborations have proven effective in preparing workers for entry-level roles while also fostering pathways for advanced technical careers. Mining companies and technology firms, for example, have developed bespoke apprenticeship schemes and training programs that address skills shortages and create attractive career opportunities for local talent, particularly early-career and young workers.

Cornish Lithium – Career Pathways in Sustainable Mining

Cornish Lithium addresses skills gaps in the mining industry by collaborating with local institutions such as the Camborne School of Mines. This partnership enables the company to develop specialised training programs and career pathways that prepare employees for roles in sustainable resource extraction. Cornish Lithium demonstrates how businesses can foster both innovation and professional growth while contributing to regional initiatives.

The findings also highlight specific successes in emerging industries. Companies operating in renewable energy and technological innovation are actively addressing skills shortages through tailored training programs and partnerships. For instance, Cornish Lithium, an emerging lithium extraction firm, has partnered with the Camborne School of Mines to develop pathways for future professionals, ensuring a supply of highly skilled workers in this niche sector. Various technology firms have similarly implemented internal training academies to equip workers with both technical and transferable skills. These initiatives identify the development of sector-specific skills as a critical area for improvement in Cornwall. However, the recent Disruption Index Spotlight Report also notes that Cornwall's demand for technology-specific skills remains below the national average, underscoring the need for sustained investment in these areas.

Apprenticeships remain a vital tool in addressing skills shortages and fostering career progression. Businesses in Cornwall have implemented sector-specific apprenticeships that focus on both technical and professional development. For example, interviewed manufacturing companies have combined traditional skills training with modules on digital tools and sustainability practices. Similarly, some tourism businesses have created hospitality management apprenticeships to retain staff and build long-term expertise in a sector traditionally marked by high turnover and employee burnout. These programs are often tailored to local needs, balancing regional priorities with the broader national agenda for workforce development.

Hertzian – Building Skills in Technology

Hertzian has demonstrated a proactive approach to skills development by creating bespoke training programs tailored to the needs of Cornwall's growing technology sector. These initiatives include workshops and mentoring schemes designed to upskill employees in technical and soft skills essential for the competitive AI and tech industries. This commitment to skills development ensures that staff are equipped to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving field, while also enhancing Cornwall's position as a hub for tech innovation.

Despite progress, structural challenges limit career progression opportunities for many workers. Cornwall continues to face lower-than-average attainment rates in basic and post-secondary education, which reduces access to higher-skilled roles. Rurality, transport cost and housing affordability further constrain workforce mobility and retention, creating additional barriers for workers seeking to advance in their careers. The findings indicate that the availability of affordable housing near major employment hubs remains a significant issue, limiting the ability of businesses to attract and retain highly skilled professionals locally and regionally. Furthermore, the lack of reliable public transport in rural areas exacerbates challenges for workers commuting to training programs or job opportunities, particularly those in less urbanised and unpedestrianised parts of Cornwall.

Looking forward, Cornwall has significant opportunities to expand its skills and educational pipeline and enhance career progression. Strengthening collaborations between businesses, educational institutions, and local government is critical to creating a more sustainable workforce. Regional frameworks that incentivise investments in technical education, particularly in high-demand sectors such as renewable energy, advanced manufacturing, construction, and technology, could significantly enhance career progression opportunities. Additionally, addressing structural challenges such as housing affordability, public transport, and digital infrastructure will be critical to enabling workforce mobility and retention. Expanding access to hybrid and remote working options in non-technical roles could also support career progression by reducing geographic constraints and opening up opportunities for workers in rural areas.

Newquay Orchard – Green Skills for the Future

As a social enterprise, Newquay Orchard integrates skills development with environmental sustainability through its training programs in green skills. By providing opportunities and workshops focused on regenerative agriculture and community engagement in horticulture, cooking skills and nature recovery, the organisation equips participants with transferable skills that address both local economic needs and environmental challenges. These efforts not only enhance individual employability, including many who are overcoming physical and mental health challenges, but also contribute to Cornwall's growing reputation as a leader in green jobs.

Our findings reveal significant progress in skills development through innovative training programs and industry-education partnerships. However, structural challenges, including educational attainment and infrastructure limitations, continue to hinder career progression in some sectors. Addressing these barriers will require coordinated efforts from businesses, educational institutions, and policymakers to ensure Cornwall's workforce is prepared for both current and future economic opportunities.

Work Culture, Quality of Work, and Deroutinisation

Our findings highlight the growing importance of fostering a positive workplace culture and improving the quality of work in Cornwall. Businesses are increasingly recognising the value of inclusive, supportive, and dynamic work environments in enhancing employee satisfaction, productivity, and retention. Flexible working arrangements have been a central focus, with organisations adopting hybrid models, remote working, and personalised schedules to meet both operational needs and employee preferences. These efforts align with Good Work Monitor (GWM) findings, which emphasise the role of job autonomy in improving work quality and engagement. However, rigid operational structures in sectors such as tourism and manufacturing often limit the implementation of such practices.

Employee engagement and well-being initiatives have also become priorities for many organisations. Businesses are incorporating tailored support systems, including mental health resources, peer recognition schemes, and wellness programs, to create more inclusive and supportive environments. Outcome-based performance models are increasingly adopted to shift the emphasis from hours worked to the quality of outputs, enabling employees to take greater control over their work and working hours. Despite these advances, smaller businesses often face resource constraints, which hinder the consistent implementation of well-being initiatives and engagement programs.

Big businesses have the knowledge, expense and time to do things, but adapting to new realities and new practices is less straightforward for small businesses – including when they scale up at pace. A company like Hiyield – recognised as one of Cornwall's 'Best Places to Work' by Business Cornwall magazine – has grown very quickly, onboarding every three weeks. An increase in size demanded new structures to ensure trust and transparency, given that the digital connections

that mediate a larger workforce require careful handling. The response to this has included a focus on measuring wellbeing and a wellbeing committee, plus a system of monetary reward and recognition additional to basic pay.

Whyfield – Transforming Work Through Outcome-Based Practices

Whyfield has adopted outcome-based work practices to foster autonomy within its team. Employees are encouraged to focus on results and do not operate under rigid, line-managed schedules, enabling greater flexibility and job satisfaction. This cultural shift has been driven by leadership's commitment to employee autonomy and continuous improvement. Staff have expressed increased motivation and reduced stress levels, while the company has benefited from enhanced productivity and retention. Whyfield's model demonstrates the potential for rethinking traditional work structures to improve both organisational and employee outcomes.

A notable trend in the findings is the process of deroutinisation, where businesses move away from repetitive, standardised tasks toward more dynamic, "non-routine", and creative roles. This shift is particularly evident in technology, renewable energy, and creative industries, where employees are increasingly engaged in problem-solving and innovation. Decorum Tiles, a ceramic tile design and production company, stood out as an example of this transformation within the Cornish creative sector. By transitioning to a design-led digital model, the business has moved beyond traditional retail to integrate creative and technical processes, offering employees more varied and stimulating roles. Similarly, roles in advanced manufacturing now integrate digital tools and processes, blending traditional skills with modern adaptability. Deroutinisation has been shown to enhance job satisfaction by making roles more engaging and equipping workers with transferable skills that support career progression. However, GWM data indicate that Cornwall continues to have a higher prevalence of routine, low-skilled jobs compared to the national average, particularly in sectors such as agriculture, retail, and hospitality, highlighting the need for broader adoption of these practices.

Decorum Tiles – Redefining Roles in Creative Industries

Decorum Tiles is currently shifting from a conventional retail approach towards an innovative, design-led digital model. Although tile painting inherently involves repetitive tasks, the company recognises this and is consciously working towards integrating employee-operated technology into daily operations. Efforts are underway to redefine employee roles by introducing elements of creative design and innovative problem-solving alongside traditional and routine tasks. Employees are increasingly involved in developing bespoke tile collections, aiming to cultivate greater ownership, purpose, and creative and work satisfaction. While progress has been made, fully embedding creativity and new technologies remains a continuing focus and is ongoing for the business.

The findings underscore significant progress in improving work culture, job quality, and adaptability, but challenges remain. Structural barriers, such as limited funding and leadership resistance, often hinder the implementation of flexible practices and innovative approaches. Seasonal and part-time employment further constrains efforts to create stable and engaging roles. Businesses also report difficulty in balancing operational efficiency with the flexibility and autonomy required to enhance job quality. Expanding access to training programs focused on skills required for deroutinised roles, such as digital literacy and problem-solving, could support the sustainability of future initiatives.

While persistent challenges must be addressed, these efforts provide a strong foundation for further progress, contributing to the creation of dynamic, inclusive, and sustainable work environments.

Economic Growth and Professionalisation

Our findings highlight the dual priorities of fostering economic growth and advancing professionalisation among businesses in Cornwall. These interconnected goals reflect the region's efforts to build resilient, sustainable organisations capable of navigating evolving market demands while maintaining high standards in workforce development, innovation, and environmental sustainability. Economic growth in Cornwall is driven by businesses across a variety of sectors, including tourism, renewable energy, technology, advanced manufacturing, and creative industries. Many organisations are adopting strategies that prioritise local development while scaling their operations nationally or internationally. For example, companies have expanded by integrating smaller agencies or diversifying their services, balancing regional roots with broader growth ambitions across the country. These approaches underscore the importance of economic diversification in driving regional prosperity and resilience.

Professionalisation, as observed in our findings, involves the adoption of formal structures by businesses, such as accreditation schemes, certifications, and operational frameworks that enhance efficiency and credibility. Cornish businesses are increasingly pursuing accreditation schemes such as B Corp certification to demonstrate their commitment to equitable and sustainable practices. There are over 2000 B Corps in the UK, representing tens of thousands of employees across a range of industries. The core criteria are governance, workers, community, environment and customers. Whilst B Corp does represent a soft kind of voluntary standard setting in some ways, it does become more concrete where articles of corporate governance are amended to include text enshrining the core principles in the way an organisation is run. Companies cite evidence that B Corp status brings investment and performance benefits, but it tends to be those businesses doing well enough to commit time and resources to the process that sign up in the first place – this also makes it hard to adjudicate over the claims made for its positive impact on performance and profits.

The 'workers' strand tends to be one area strengthened in the continual revision of criteria that takes place as a basis for continuous improvement amongst accredited companies – with an important principle of the scheme, as we heard it from companies involved, being that re-certification is often more challenging than initial certification. In a 'balanced scorecard' approach, 'workers' as a category is granted more weight than some other areas. It is evaluated on the basis of hourly pay and the real living wage, the differential between the lowest paid and the highest, and the amount above the minimum wage that the lowest paid receive. It also evaluates whether companies offer cost-of-living adjustments marched to inflation, pensions, and any profit-sharing initiatives or employee ownership, including the percentages distributed by means of such practices. There are some quite robust expectations about what goes in employee handbooks around parental leave and flexibility, and other benchmarking questions are concerned with issues like upskilling or cross-skill training initiatives, staff turnover and the use of surveying to understand and empower workers. Mental health and wellbeing is also an emerging aspect of this 'workers' piece.

Organisations like Wildanet, Cornish Gems and Agile PR have adopted these standards, embedding sustainability and social value into their growth strategies. One of the strongest aspects of B Corp accreditation is the sense in which it is seen not as a final resting place but a journey, where impact assessments are aspirational. Cornwall Council having adopted B Corp count as a metric in the doughnut-economics-influenced Cornwall Plan, the local authority might also look to this 'aspirational' aspect of B Corps as a template for a potential 'Good Work Charter'. In particular, we heard that the B Corp accreditation journey has driven firm development of progressive policies around flexible working and other related areas. Rather than a static strategy or endpoint, the achievement of B Corp status is seen as a method of continuous improvement with good work as one of its aims. Another aspect that a Good Work Charter might learn from is

that B Corp status adds brand value, especially in the business-to-business space where B Corp accredited firms are more likely to buy from or contract to similarly accredited counterparts.

However, findings also indicate that small and medium-sized businesses face barriers to formal certification due to cost and administrative requirements. In response, many SMEs have adopted alternative approaches, such as self-regulated frameworks and informal sustainability initiatives, to integrate professionalisation into their operations.

Sustainability has emerged as a key driver of both economic growth and professionalisation. Businesses are integrating environmentally conscious practices into their operational models to align with consumer expectations and regulatory demands. For example, manufacturing companies are adopting circular economy principles, while tourism businesses are prioritising carbon footprint reduction and waste elimination. These practices not only support environmental goals but also position businesses to attract new markets and investment. Our findings highlight the critical role of such practices in enhancing regional competitiveness, particularly as Cornwall transitions toward a more sustainable economy.

The findings also reveal a regional focus on leadership development and workforce upskilling as integral to professionalisation. Companies are creating internal training programs and leadership pipelines to equip employees with the skills required for higher responsibility roles. For example, some organisations are providing managerial training and mentoring opportunities to cultivate leaders who can drive innovation and adapt to market changes. While these initiatives support long-term growth, findings suggest that access to such programs is uneven, particularly for smaller businesses with limited resources.

Our findings indicate that technological and economic transitions are often constrained by institutional and governance barriers, which shape Cornish firms' ability to invest in good work practices. This is evident in the low rate of accredited businesses in Cornwall, as SMEs struggle with the cost and complexity of formal certification schemes like B Corp and Living Wage accreditation. Many businesses in the region have instead pursued internal, context-specific innovations to enhance employment quality without incurring prohibitive costs, despite that the lack of institutional support for these alternative approaches limits their scalability and long-term impact.

We identify procurement barriers as another key challenge for regional economies. Cornwall's reliance on small enterprises means that many businesses lack the capacity to meet public-sector procurement criteria that could enable them to secure stable contracts and improve job security for employees, especially where procurement policies use a social value rationale to incentivise businesses to upgrade conditions and standards. The resultant segmentation of the regional economy is a key barrier to progress, with large firms and external investors disproportionately benefiting from regional development initiatives. Addressing this requires targeted interventions to support SMEs in navigating procurement processes, regional funding mechanisms to subsidise good work practices, and incentives for collaboration between small firms and public-sector employers such as via social value procurement policies.

Challenges remain in balancing growth with sustainability and professionalisation. Many organisations report difficulties in aligning long-term strategic goals with immediate operational demands, particularly in sectors with narrow profit margins. Additionally, the reliance on seasonal and part-time labour in some industries complicates efforts to embed professional standards across the workforce. Our findings also highlight infrastructure limitations, such as inadequate transport links and digital connectivity, as barriers to scaling operations and attracting investment.

Business Support Organisations as Exporters of Good Work

Cornwall's network of business support organisations plays a critical role in fostering good work principles and disseminating these practices across the local and regional economy. We include this general study to illustrate how these organisations act as facilitators, co-developers, and advocates for productive and sustainable employment practices, ensuring that businesses within Cornwall can access the tools, guidance, and resources needed to align with good work standards. By promoting collaboration and providing tailored support, they amplify the reach and impact of good work initiatives, helping to establish Cornwall as a hub for innovative employment practices and embedding best-practice across their targeted industries. Organisations studied included various business support entities—often operating within their own support niche—such as Flourish Workplace, Happy Business, Smart Working Revolution, Agile PR, the RDA System, and Karibu Coaching.

Business support organisations in Cornwall focus on fostering workplace transformations that align with contemporary employment priorities. They encourage transitions to flexible working models, promote inclusive leadership practices and relevant certification pathways, and integrate green skills into workforce development as well as manage strategies for employee health and wellbeing. These efforts are designed to address systemic challenges such as workforce reintegration, marginalisation, and the need for transferable skills in emerging industries. Training programs and mentoring initiatives provided by these organisations are instrumental in helping businesses adopt practices that improve employee satisfaction and retention. These entities ensure that good work principles are embedded in the Cornish economy by engaging with a broad network of local firms.

The influence of these organisations is particularly evident in their ability to connect businesses across sectors. By creating networks and facilitating knowledge-sharing, they enable businesses to learn from one another and adopt best practice. This collaborative approach strengthens the region's economic resilience, as businesses collectively benefit from shared innovations in employment practices. The emphasis on cross-sector learning also allows for the adaptation of good work principles to diverse industries, ensuring that practices are contextually relevant and widely applicable within Cornwall's unique economy. These organisations also play a crucial role in addressing Cornwall's structural challenges. By partnering with local authorities and educational institutions, they work to bridge gaps in skills and infrastructure that often hinder workforce development. Initiatives aimed at upskilling employees, integrating under-represented groups into the workforce, and supporting the adoption of sustainable business practices are central to their mission. This focus not only benefits individual businesses but also contributes to the broader regional economy.

Despite their success, these organisations face challenges such as funding constraints, limited capacity for scaling operations, and the need for deeper collaborations with policymakers to address systemic barriers. Strengthening partnerships and fostering resource-sharing among business support entities could enhance their collective impact. These organisations have the potential to significantly advance good work within the region by aligning their efforts with regional priorities and leveraging Cornwall's unique strengths.

Looking forward, there are significant opportunities for Cornwall to build on its progress in economic growth and professionalisation. Regional collaborations, such as industry networks and public-private partnerships, could provide businesses with the resources and support needed to pursue sustainable and professionalised growth. Expanding access to funding for certification schemes and training programs would enable more organisations to meet formal accreditation standards. There are, however, some shortfalls, with our findings indicating that such schemes are often perceived as marketing tools rather than meaningful commitments, with concerns over greenwashing also highlighting the need for greater transparency in aligning business practices with ethical and environmental standards. To overcome these challenges, alternative approaches such as Good Work Charters offer a flexible, region-specific framework for businesses to demonstrate their commitment to professionalisation and good work practices. Examples like the Greater Manchester and Scottish Fair Work frameworks provide useful models that Cornwall could adapt to its unique economic and social context to promote inclusive growth.

Our findings illustrate that Cornwall's businesses are making progress in achieving sustainable growth and professionalisation, with innovative practices and certifications playing a role. However, persistent challenges, including resource constraints and structural barriers, must be addressed to ensure these efforts are inclusive and scalable. By continuing to prioritise economic growth alongside professionalisation, Cornwall has the potential to build a resilient and sustainable economy that supports both business success and workforce development.

Community Impact and Social Value

Our findings highlight the significant role that businesses in Cornwall play in creating community impact and delivering social value. Across sectors, organisations are embedding community-focused initiatives into their operations, fostering stronger local connections and addressing regional challenges such as economic inequality, housing shortages, skills development and economic inactivity due to health barriers and long-term sickness. Our findings emphasise the importance of social contributions as a component of high-quality employment and sustainable economic growth. Notably, the findings reveal that businesses often pursue these initiatives because of their potential to drive long-term profitability, workforce and brand loyalty, and reputational gains.

Businesses in Cornwall are increasingly aligning their goals with the needs of local communities, often prioritising initiatives that yield mutual benefits. For example, organisations supporting local economies by sourcing goods and services from regional suppliers not only strengthen local businesses but also enhance their own supply chain resilience and cost efficiency. Similarly, companies addressing housing challenges by offering employees affordable accommodation or partnering with community housing projects improve employee well-being and retention, directly benefiting their operational stability. These initiatives illustrate that community-focused efforts often yield measurable returns, such as higher productivity, reduced turnover, and improved employer branding.

Treveth Holdings – Providing Housing for Community Stability

Treveth Holdings addresses the intersection of social value and economic stability by developing new housing projects for local residents. These developments are designed to address the region's housing availability crisis, which is a significant barrier to workforce retention and economic growth. By providing mixed-tenure housing and long-term rental options, Treveth contributes to community well-being and economic resilience.

A recurring theme in our findings is the emphasis on education and skills-sharing programs as a means of fostering community resilience. Various businesses are involved in partnerships with schools, colleges, and charities to provide mentorship, training, and work experience opportunities for young people and under-represented groups. These initiatives not only address Cornwall's long-term workforce needs but also create a pipeline of skilled and motivated employees for participating organisations. Businesses in creative industries and social enterprises, for example, have implemented programs that enhance employability skills, which contribute to regional workforce development while positioning the businesses as leaders in innovation and inclusion.

The findings also demonstrate how social enterprises are at the forefront of prioritising social value while aligning their efforts with sustainable business growth. Initiatives such as increasing food security through partnerships with food banks or supporting mental health through community-driven wellness programs create tangible social benefits while improving workforce engagement and public perception. These efforts align with our observations that businesses actively engaging with their communities often experience enhanced reputations and stronger customer loyalty, both of which translate into financial benefits and broader growth.

Konnect Communities – Supporting Marginalised Groups



Konnect Communities works with individuals involved in the justice system and other marginalised backgrounds to improve their employability and social inclusion. Through tailored training programs, mentorship, and partnerships with local businesses, the organisation helps participants build confidence and secure stable employment. This approach has broader social benefits, reducing barriers to workforce participation and fostering a more inclusive economy in Cornwall.

Despite these positive developments, challenges remain. Many organisations report difficulties in balancing community-focused initiatives with core operational demands, particularly in sectors with narrow margins or limited resources. Smaller and values-driven businesses, while committed to social impact, often lack the funding or capacity to scale their initiatives. Moreover, rurality and infrastructure limitations can hinder the delivery of community projects, particularly in reaching the most isolated areas. Despite these and other challenges, Cornish businesses continue to pursue community-focused strategies, recognising their potential to contribute to long-term growth and resilience. Cornwall can build on these successes by fostering collaboration between businesses, local authorities, and community groups. Regional networks could help small and medium-sized enterprises pool informational resources, share best practices, and amplify the impact of their community-focused efforts. Expanding funding opportunities for social value initiatives, particularly in under-served areas, would enable more businesses to contribute meaningfully to their communities while driving their own growth. By continuing to prioritise community engagement and social value, Cornwall's businesses can strengthen their local economies while addressing the social challenges that impact their workforce and wider communities, achieving both social and financial returns.

4. A Toolkit Approach to Advancing Good Work in Cornwall

Cornwall faces systemic issues such as housing shortages, skills mismatches, and unreliable public transport, all of which compound barriers to achieving employment quality. Building on evidence from the IFOW Disruption Index, interviews, roundtable and stakeholder discussions, and case studies, the toolkit of approaches outlined here offers targeted recommendations for businesses, policymakers, and communities, focusing on region-specific solutions relevant to Cornwall.

Cornish businesses are adopting innovative practices to address the constraints imposed by low-margin industries, seasonality, and small enterprise structures. Flexible working practices provide one such avenue. Businesses can transition to outcome-based models where employees are evaluated on outcomes rather than fixed schedules, enabling greater employee autonomy, retention, and engagement. These models are particularly effective in creative, tech, and knowledge-driven sectors but require cultural and operational changes to succeed. For industries with more rigid workflows, such as manufacturing and hospitality, multi-role contracts and workforce-sharing initiatives offer practical alternatives. These models allow employees to transition between roles or organisations during off-peak seasons, providing year-round job stability and reducing turnover costs.

Improving financial security for workers is critical, particularly considering Cornwall's below-average median pay. While formal accreditation schemes like Living Wage Foundation (LWF) certification are inaccessible for many SMEs due to high costs and the time sink involved, businesses can adopt incremental pay equity practices. Inflation-linked wage reviews, discretionary bonuses, and profit-sharing arrangements are viable methods for enhancing employee financial resilience without significant administrative burdens. These approaches not only improve employee retention but also foster a sense of shared purpose within organisations and in the workplace. Additionally, affordable housing is a pressing issue that directly impacts employee well-being and retention across the region. Some businesses are demonstrating how employer-led housing solutions can address this challenge.

Another area where Cornish businesses can lead is in skills development. Cornwall's emerging sectors, such as digital technology, renewable energy, and space technology, require a workforce equipped with new and specialised skills. Businesses should collaborate with educational institutions and business support entities to design sector-specific training programs. Additionally, green skills training aligned with the region's sustainability priorities can be delivered through partnerships with such organisations. Businesses must also address barriers to training participation, such as transport costs or the need for paid training time, to ensure inclusivity.

Fostering inclusivity and mental well-being in workplaces is essential. SMEs in Cornwall, particularly those in values-driven industries, are increasingly implementing mental and physical health support programs around wellbeing and musculoskeletal conditions, for instance. Addressing these issues are crucial for ensuring those with health barriers remain in work and can re-enter work following challenges to labour market participation.

Cornwall's systemic barriers are interconnected, requiring businesses, policymakers, and communities to work collaboratively. While businesses play a pivotal role in improving job quality through innovative practices, these efforts must be supported by structural interventions that address housing, transport, and regional skills and policy gaps. Bridging these domains ensures that good work initiatives are not only sustainable but also scalable across sectors and demographics.

Policymakers must address Cornwall's structural barriers to create an environment where good work can thrive. Housing affordability is one of the most pressing issues for the region's workforce. High property costs, driven by seasonal tourism and second-home ownership, exacerbate financial insecurity for employees in low-wage sectors. Policymakers should prioritise affordable housing developments through public-private partnerships, offering incentives for businesses to co-invest in workforce housing projects. Local authorities could also introduce policies to limit second-home ownership and holiday homes in high-demand areas, ensuring more housing stock is available for permanent residents.

Public transport infrastructure is another critical barrier, with many rural areas of Cornwall poorly connected to employment hubs. Policymakers must invest in expanding bus and train services, particularly in areas where limited options increase commuting costs and travel times for people performing low-wage or seasonal work. Subsidised transport schemes for employees in key sectors, such as hospitality and healthcare, could further support workforce participation.

A Good Work Charter for Cornwall

Good Work Charters provide a flexible, region-specific framework that can complement these structural initiatives. Unlike often cost-prohibitive national certifications, charters allow businesses to adopt incremental improvements tailored to their operational realities. These charters could set out baseline standards for pay, flexibility, and workforce development while recognising incremental progress through a tiered structure. In places like the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, similar charters have been steered by advisory boards bringing together social partners representing all sides of the employment relationship, from trades unions to chambers of commerce. Policymakers in Cornwall should collaborate with local business networks and the Chamber of Commerce to co-design a Cornwall-specific charter that aligns with regional priorities and contextual realities, such as addressing seasonality and transport barriers.

The government's New Deal for Working People, now solidified in the Employment Rights Bill, poses both challenges and opportunities for the development and implementation of a Good Work Charter. The challenges arise from the bar having been raised in such a way as to cancel out some of the very demands a Charter would make. The opportunities come from the context the legislation provides to enable companies to adapt to a different way of doing things, and to use this as a baseline from which places can innovate upwards. As well as a set of overarching values, a Good Work Charter could therefore be used to encode, at a subnational level, both the legislative advances made under the current government in the sphere of work and employment and local innovations matched to the geographical specificities of Cornwall as a place. In part, this could function as a supportive structure for assisting businesses in understanding, implementing and celebrating achievements against the adjustments required by the new regulations, as well as finding ways to go further and improve practices in line with their own ambitions and aspirations.

As a result of recommendations in Cornwall's last Employment and Skills Strategy and the local authority's Business Plan, Cornwall Council is indeed currently developing a Good Work Charter as part of a broader Good Business Charter. The aim of this broader charter is to get the business community to commit to Good Growth principles in sustainability, supply chain, procurement, health, productivity and other areas. In particular, the Good Work Charter element would have the aim of providing business support and advice around the implementation of the Employment

Rights Bill. The aim has to be to help and assist those companies that are struggling; the paradox of accreditation schemes is that many of the companies with the time and resources to commit to pursuing it are already doing well, and so the upgrading effect is limited. A Good Work Charter has to run the gamut from those firms wishing to gain value from what they are already doing right to those facing challenges in being the employer they or their workers would like them to be. This means particular sectoral approaches and packages for parts of the Cornish economy where conditions make securing good work difficult: hospitality, tourism, retail, and adult social care.

A series of questions confronts such a charter. Should it operate as a system of accreditation, or more of a 'pledge' that firms that declare they are working towards? If the former, how to include and exclude businesses from accreditation – by means of an approach that penalises breaches or supports businesses to do the best they can in an 'aspirational' fashion akin to B Corp? How to confer benefits on companies that do sign up – fast-track through eligibility requirements for funding schemes like the Shared Prosperity Fund, or preferential treatment for public tenders and procurement contracts? Then there is the thorny issue of subscription or accreditation rates. There will be a consultation process for businesses to feed back to Cornwall Council their view of how such a scheme should function, and whether a declaration or accreditation route would be preferred.

There are many examples around the UK that can be learnt from in these respects; Greater Manchester's Good Employment Charter is a particularly robust example with a technical panel assessing applications with academic input, a separate academic team evaluating progress and performance against its goals, and a fully-funded team delivering the scheme. Where other less well-resourced charter schemes have tended to dwindle away, Greater Manchester's has gone from strength to strength producing guides for different groups of workers – such as students and young people – about what 'good work' is, a learning network to encourage continuous improvement, and regular visits to companies. Although a strong link with local authority procurement gives the charter teeth in ensuring compliance, of the seven areas features in the Good Employment Charter, the only hard-line measure is the payment of the Real Living Wage, which recent government legislation now mandates anyway.

In learning from such examples, there is the need for a pragmatic approach in Cornwall. One direction of travel that should be considered would be for the charter to have different levels of commitment for different tiers and categories of business, supporting businesses to progressively adapt to the Employment Rights Bill via information and advice. Stages or levels of commitment would enable companies to jump onto the good work journey at different points depending on their particular market position or other factors. Once the minimum has been conformed with, firms can then move further up in standards and ambitions based on case studies of what is possible. Those who are already signed up or accredited can then help others, with collective targets set for a sector (or groups of sectors using the definitions in Cornwall's Good Growth Plan) to help build a sense of shared effort. Whether a declaration or accreditation, in this form the scheme would have a future-facing dimension with measures along the way of how you achieve targets appropriate for a company's size or sector. This could be accompanied by a regular review or survey.

A particular focus of such a scheme would be to help SMEs achieve good work outcomes, especially in those sectors which for market reasons struggle to pass on the benefits of growth and productivity to employees. SMEs have also found it hard to compete on the funding landscape in Cornwall, so a charter would need to act as a framework through which smaller companies could access material support to realise their aspirations. To support SMEs further, policymakers may introduce targeted incentives, such as grants or other forms of support for businesses implementing good work practices. For instance, funding for apprenticeships and upskilling programs in high-growth sectors could bridge the region's skills gaps while increasing employability for young and marginalised workers.

By enabling access to smaller firms via the supply chains they feed into, procurement is one local authority lever that a Good Work Charter could pull in pursuit of better work in Cornwall, promoting the values and principles of the charter. Best practice could be generalised from the top to the bottom by encouraging compliance or accreditation as a condition of applying for and winning tenders. This can also play a part in revaluing and upgrading forms of work that are currently undervalued or downgraded, such as in adult social care. Another area where Council contracts could be used as a means to promote the charter's aspirations would be in place and planning policies – for instance, where sites of work and employment like industrial states are leased provision could be made that companies adhere to the standards set out in the Charter.

Ultimately the designation of a set of common standards and principles, and their generalisation across Cornwall's distinctive, core and foundational sectors, will mean that individual workers can foresee careers where they ply their trade in different sectors using the transferable skills they have developed safe in the knowledge that there an ecology of decent employers present within the region.

Beyond the Charter

Beyond the Charter, continued collaboration between businesses, policymakers, and community organisations will be critical to addressing Cornwall's systemic challenges. Community-led initiatives have significant potential to enhance inclusivity and social value, improving employment conditions across the region. Social enterprises like Konnect Communities, are emerging to provide tailored support for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds, helping them access training and stable employment. Policymakers and businesses should work together to scale these efforts by providing funding, infrastructure, and strategic partnerships. Community organisations can also address digital literacy and childcare access, removing key barriers to workforce participation for women and under-represented groups.

We stress that structural interventions—beyond firm-level strategies—are essential to fostering good work in regions experiencing economic stagnation and workforce precarity. Cornwall exemplifies multiple overlapping regional disparities, including lower levels of infrastructure investment, fragmented economic networks, and weak institutional support for workforce development. A Good Work strategy for Cornwall must be underpinned by systemic reforms that strengthen the enabling conditions for quality employment. One key area for intervention is regional investment in connectivity and infrastructure, which remains a significant barrier to employment accessibility. Investment in transport networks and digital infrastructure is directly correlated with improved job quality, as it enables both labour mobility and business expansion. Enhancing rural transport links across the region could facilitate broader workforce participation and allow Cornish businesses to access a wider talent pool.

Another critical area is skills development and adaptability, to ensure that technological and industrial transitions lead to job creation rather than displacement. Cornwall's growth in renewable energy, lithium extraction, and the space sector presents a unique opportunity to shape skills pathways that align with long-term employment needs. However, without regional coordination between businesses, training providers, and policymakers, skills mismatches will persist, leaving workers. To counter this, policymakers should expand workforce mobility schemes, incentivise multi-sector training partnerships, and ensure that vocational programs are aligned with emerging economic opportunities rather than existing low-wage industries.

Finally, Cornwall must develop alternative governance frameworks to support businesses in achieving Good Work without relying exclusively on external accreditation schemes. The Good Work Charters proposed in this Toolkit offer a set of values that serve as a practical mechanism for embedding incremental progress in employment quality. By tailoring charters to the needs of SMEs, Cornwall could establish a tiered recognition system that rewards improvements in flexibility, job security, and workforce inclusion.

Advancing good work in Cornwall requires a multi-pronged approach that addresses the region's unique economic, social, and geographic challenges. Businesses must adopt innovative practices to improve flexibility, pay equity, and skills development, while policymakers must tackle structural issues such as housing and transport. Good Work Charters provide a practical, accessible alternative to certification, enabling businesses to implement equitable employment practices at their own pace. Collaborative partnerships that engage community organisations, businesses, and local government will be essential to building a resilient and inclusive employment landscape in Cornwall.

5. Conclusion: Towards a Future of Good Work in Cornwall

This report has highlighted the progress Cornwall is making in advancing good work practices, as well as the persistent challenges that threaten to undermine this progress. Cornwall's reliance on seasonal industries, low-margin businesses, and its peripheral economic position has entrenched systemic issues such as housing shortages, skills gaps, and poor transport infrastructure. However, this research demonstrates that targeted regional initiatives can mitigate these barriers and create a resilient foundation for inclusive, sustainable economic growth.

A central recommendation of this report is the development of a Cornwall-specific Good Work Charter. Such a charter would provide a flexible framework for businesses to adopt good work practices incrementally, aligning with the operational realities of small and micro-enterprises that dominate the region. Unlike national certification schemes, which are often inaccessible due to high costs, and demand considerable input of time, a Good Work Charter offers an adaptable and scalable solution. By setting out baseline standards for fair pay, workforce development, and job quality, the charter could encourage collaboration among businesses while recognising incremental improvements through a tiered approach.

In light of the specificities of work and employment in different sectors facing distinct labour and product market conditions and challenges, it may make sense for part of the charter to be focused on tailored goals and outcomes for certain industries or groups of industries, perhaps distinguished by the Distinctive/Core/Foundational categories used in Cornwall's Good Growth Plan. This would also require in turn a coherent narrative regarding the benefits that would accrue to firms in particular sectors given their participation in or adherence to such a charter.

The potential impact of such an initiative is substantial. By addressing Cornwall's unique challenges—such as seasonal employment instability and transport barriers—a charter could support businesses in retaining talent, fostering inclusivity, and building resilience across sectors, as well as improving pay. Moreover, it would create a mechanism for amplifying successful practices regionally and nationally, positioning Cornwall as a model for implementing good work in peripheral economies, similar to policy innovations undertaken in Wales and the north of England. Policymakers have a vital role to play in facilitating this process, from co-designing the charter with local business networks to providing incentives for adoption and monitoring its impact over time.

In addition to a Good Work Charter, public-private partnerships will be crucial in tackling the structural barriers that limit access to good work. Investments in affordable housing, education, and transport infrastructure will address the foundational issues that prevent many workers from fully participating in the regional labour market. Initiatives to improve skills development, particularly in high-growth sectors such as renewable energy and digital innovation, will create pathways for local workers to access higher-value roles. By aligning these efforts with good work principles, Cornwall can ensure that its economic development is both inclusive and sustainable.

Collaboration between businesses, policymakers, and community organisations must underpin these efforts. Community-led initiatives, such as those pioneered by Konnect Communities, Newquay Orchard, and other Cornish social enterprises demonstrate the potential for grassroots

solutions to drive meaningful change. Expanding these models through strategic partnerships and funding would enhance Cornwall's ability to address marginalisation, improve workforce participation, and foster stronger ties between businesses and their communities. At the same time, a stronger emphasis on monitoring and accountability will be essential for ensuring progress and identifying areas for improvement.

Advancing good work in Cornwall is not just about addressing current challenges but also about creating a shared vision for the region's future. Ultimately, many of the challenges to good work in Cornwall are downstream of seasonal and contingent market conditions that produce low-margin business models with little capacity to adapt to the demands and requirements of better employment. The solutions, then, will sometimes be upstream – better pay cannot necessarily be achieved with the wave of a Charter, but will be underpinned by a business model based on higher productivity, higher investment in skills and training, and greater power and leverage for workers in strategically important sectors to lay claim to the value of their labour.

In this respect, the best driver of good work will be a joined-up approach to economic design underpinned by the high-growth industries of the future and higher-value upgrades to Cornwall's existing sectors. A particular need is for industrial enterprises of the kind of scale and volume that would be conducive for upward trends in pay, productivity and progress pathways for workers. Having some of the lowest union density in the country, the inclusion of trade unions as a social partner achieving good work outcomes through collective bargaining could be an important part of the future profile of the Cornish economy in an age of reindustrialisation. Cornwall Council's Good Growth Plan provides a vision for the diversification required in this respect.

Embedding good work practices into the regional economic strategy can build a more resilient, equitable, and prosperous economy that benefits everyone. Good work helps to address several issues central to Cornwall's broader workforce and skills strategy: it helps companies both recruit and retain the skilled workers they need, whilst also ensuring – through healthier, happier workplaces – that people stay in jobs and do not fall out of labour market participation and into the impasse of economic inactivity. Regional initiatives like a Good Work Charter, coupled with targeted policy interventions and collaborative partnerships, provide a roadmap for achieving this vision. With sustained commitment and innovation, Cornwall can establish itself as a leader in good work, setting an example for other peripheral regions across the UK.



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Institute for the Future of Work
Somerset House
Strand
London
WC2R 1LA
ifow.org / [@ifow.org](https://twitter.com/ifow.org)

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