

<b>Institution:</b> University of Strathclyde		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> C17 Business and Management Studies		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Advancing fair work policy and practice in Scotland to benefit workers, businesses and society		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2010 - 2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b> Patricia Findlay Colin Lindsay Johanna McQuarrie (née Commander)	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b> Professor Professor Research Fellow	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b> 1 February 2010 – present 5 January 2012 – present 3 April 2006 – present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2014 – December 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> No		
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>Strathclyde's research on job quality, skills utilisation and workplace partnership has shaped Scotland's approach to fair work and driven its implementation and ongoing development. By informing the Working Together Review, the research approach and findings drove the establishment of an independent Fair Work Convention, and underpinned the development of the FWC Fair Work Framework. Since 2016, this Framework has influenced Scottish Government policy (the most notable outcome being the publication and pursuit of a Fair Work Action Plan), shaped the priorities and practices of public agencies delivering business support, and changed the practices of employers and unions. This has contributed to improvements in job quality, particularly in relation to job security and effective voice, and ensured targeted responses to particular challenges, including sector-specific issues and the ramifications of the Covid-19 pandemic.</p>		
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>Under the Directorship of Professor Patricia Findlay, since 2010 the Scottish Centre for Employment Research (SCER) at the University of Strathclyde has undertaken conceptual and empirical research on job quality, skills, skills under-utilisation, and workplace partnership and governance including the role of worker voice (directly and through unions) in simultaneously improving workplace practice and worker outcomes. This research has advanced academic understanding and established an evidence base to guide policy and practice by providing an expansive definition of job quality and demonstrating the benefits of a holistic approach that links fair work to individual, business/organisational and societal priorities and outcomes. By adopting a holistic approach that goes beyond an individual's job quality (and interest in improving job quality) to link fair work to individual, business/organisational and societal priorities and outcomes, SCER's research has identified and highlighted the role and interests of multiple key stakeholders in relation to fair work. This research prioritises collaborative mutual gains approaches to addressing a series of linked individual, workplace, economic and societal agendas around fair work, and emphasises the primary role of employers and their strategic choice in the delivery of fair work, the role unions can play, and the potential for public policy to shape it. Three examples of some of the research undertaken follow.</p> <p><b>Skills-underutilisation</b> (2010): Working with case study employers, trades unions and the Scottish Trades Union Congress, SCER undertook research into three company-specific initiatives to address skills-underutilisation, interviewing managers, workers and trade unions connected to the initiatives. The research identified the need to consider explicitly skills use in the context of business/organisational objectives, HR practices and priorities and the design of work and employment, and the need to build in the delivery of gains to all relevant parties in skills utilisation interventions for these to be implemented successfully [R1].</p> <p><b>Fair, Innovative and Transformative Work in Social Care</b> (2018): Conducted for the Fair Work Convention, this project identified barriers to and facilitators of fair work in social care. It did this through an investigation of experiences in 5 third sector care providers, a group discussion session</p>		

held as part of Scottish Care's annual Workforce Event, and small-scale qualitative research with employees and managers at 3 independent sector organisations [R4].

**Job quality interventions** (2016): Commissioned by NHS Scotland, SCER examined the role and potential of job quality interventions and specifically of upskilling in facilitating high-level robotics implementation, with research findings identifying how and where upskilling aligned to automation can deliver better individual and organisational performance, while also identifying real challenges in enhancing the skills and job quality of employees more proximate to technology operations [R6].

Key findings from SCER's overall body of research include:

- Workplace interventions are crucial loci in which to address job quality issues. Analysis showed that employers configure job quality in terms of pay, contractual stability, training and skills formation, job design and career development opportunities to produce better (or worse) jobs. Consequently, employers' interests in relation to the availability or otherwise of fair work predominate. The research showed that employer strategies around product/service quality can drive job quality improvements [R3,R4,R6].
- Other workplace stakeholders have an important role to play in shaping how employers respond. SCER's case studies of union engagement in skills utilisation and collaborative work with employers on skills and learning showed how unions can both improve members' learning and skills (with benefits for pay and career prospects) and ensure that these are deployed effectively in the workplace [R2].
- There is scope for intervention and evidence that such interventions can measurably improve job quality [R3,R4,R6]. The research enhanced and deepened knowledge of job quality interventions through empirical work that explains and demonstrates the effectiveness, impact and sustainability of interventions at national, sectoral and workplace level.
- Interventions parallel to the workplace by government and other stakeholders can play a reinforcing role. Governments can create policy to encourage employers to deliver job quality; can offer conditional support to businesses; can insert job quality clauses into public procurement contracts; can align economic development and business support to deliver better job quality, and can use education system levers to drive not just skills and qualifications but expectations of high-quality work [R3,R4].

### 3. References to the research (Strathclyde affiliated authors in bold)

**R1 P. Findlay, C. Warhurst and J. Commander** (2011) *The Role of Trade Unions in Effective Skills Utilisation: Three Scottish Case Studies*, SCER report for Scottish Union Learning and the Scottish Trades Union Congress [available at <https://bit.ly/3r79n1s> or from HEI on request]

**R2 P. Findlay and C. Warhurst** (2011) Union learning funds and trade union revitalization: a new tool in the toolkit? *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, 49(S1): s115-s134 <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8543.2010.00817.x> [REF2 in 2014]

**R3 C. Warhurst, F. Carre, P. Findlay and C. Tilly** (2012) *Are bad Jobs Inevitable? Trends, Determinants and Responses to Job Quality in the Twenty-First Century*, Palgrave Macmillan, 232 pages, ISBN 978-0-230-33691-9 <https://bit.ly/3vleX3K> [available from HEI on request]

**R4 Scottish Centre for Employment Research** (2018) *Fair, Innovative and Transformative Work in Social Care*, report for the Fair Work Convention, published by the Scottish Government, 73 pages <https://bit.ly/30GqTpm>

**R5 P. Findlay** (2019) 'Skills and the social value of work' in G. Gall (ed.) *Handbook on the Politics of Labour, Work and Employment*, Edward Elgar, pp. 317-338, ISBN: 978-1-784-71568-7 <https://bit.ly/2Okjrf> [available from HEI on request]

**R6 P. Findlay, C. Lindsay, J. McQuarrie, M. Bennie, E.D. Corcoran and R. Van Der Meer** (2017) Employer choice and job quality: workplace innovation, work redesign and employee perceptions of job quality in a complex healthcare setting, *Work and Occupations*, 44(1): 113-136 <https://doi.org/10.1177/0730888416678038> [REF2]

**Notes on the quality of research:** All articles/chapters have been peer reviewed and are published in leading international journals/high-quality books. This research has been supported with funding totalling approximately GBP1,100,000. Key funders include ESRC (e.g. Findlay (PI), Lindsay and McQuarrie (CIs), SKOPE, *Work, employment, skills and training: what future for Scotland?*, 1/01/13–31/03/14, GBP66,331), Scottish Government (e.g. Lindsay (PI), *FITwork in the Scottish Social Care Sector*, 1/08/17-31/01/18, GBP29,351), and Joseph Rowntree Foundation (Findlay (PI) and Lindsay (CI), *What works: influencing employers on work and poverty*, 1/02/18–31/01/20, GBP55,845).

#### 4. Details of the impact

By providing a robust and respected evidence base, Strathclyde's Scottish Centre for Employment Research (SCER) has shaped Scotland's approach to fair work and driven its implementation and ongoing development. This has been achieved through sustained stakeholder collaboration and membership of key groups by Professors Findlay and Lindsay since 2014. As a result, Scotland has established a clear policy, implementation and monitoring framework which has enabled improvements across the various dimensions of fair work, most notably security of employment and income, and highlighted priority areas for action. Sectoral analysis has been at the heart of this, ensuring targeted responses to challenges including the ramifications of the Covid-19 pandemic.

##### Shaping Scotland's approach to fair work

Described as *'a source of inspiration, challenge and support'* by the former Permanent Secretary to the Scottish Government (2010-2015), Professor Findlay made a substantial contribution to the Working Together Review of Progressive Workplace Policies in Scotland conducted in 2014 [S1a]. Commissioned by the Government, the Review Group (comprising 8 members, with Findlay as the only academic representative) drew heavily on SCER research to identify good practice and opportunities for improvement. According to the Review Chair, Findlay *'played an absolutely vital role in...ensuring that we all saw the big picture, our discussions were evidence-based, and shaping our conclusions and recommendations'* [S2a]. More specifically, SCER *'research on the potential of employer-union partnership both at workplace level and in the development of policy at a strategic level, and...on the future challenges facing Scotland's workplaces, were both crucial to our recommendations that progressive workplace practice could be better supported at a national level by the creation of a stakeholder body to provide leadership on Fair Work'* [S2a]. This is evident in the Review report itself which cites R1 as evidence of the benefits of union engagement in skills utilisation and *'calls for a more complete approach to optimising our workplaces...recognising the relevance and value that can be delivered by all parties and the gains that can accrue from focussing on common interest'* [S2b pp.3,18].

Responding to the Working Together Review recommendations with parliamentary approval, the Scottish Government *'implemented a number of changes'* in 2014/2015 including: the establishment of a Cabinet Secretary post for Fair Work, Skills and Training (believed to be the first of its kind in Europe); creation of the proposed stakeholder body (known as the Fair Work Convention); continued support for Scottish Union Learning and a refreshed Memorandum of Understanding with the Scottish Trade Union Congress (STUC); establishment and continuation of a staff governance model in the NHS; and support for the Living Wage through funding of the Poverty Alliance and Living Wage Foundation, promotion of Living Wage accreditation and setting an example with the Public Sector Pay Policy [S2c]. Established in April 2015 to provide a *'focal point to develop, promote and sustain a fair work framework in Scotland'*, the Fair Work Convention (comprising 9 members, including Findlay as independent academic advisor) spent its first year developing an evidence-based Fair Work Framework. Published in 2016, this drew heavily on SCER's existing body of research (mapping entirely to the broad and holistic approach outlined) as well as new studies commissioned for the purpose including a mapping of stakeholder views and briefings on the key dimensions of fair work (effective voice, opportunity, security, fulfilments and respect) [S3a]. The Framework also incorporated SCER's analytical model from the FITwork project which *'captures how fair work is a crucial component in delivering high performing and innovative workplaces'* [S3a p.8]. Attesting to this influence, the Convention Co-Chair commented, *'one only has to look at the Endnotes to the Fair Work Framework...to see the impact which the research carried out by the Scottish Centre for Employment Research had on the work of the Convention'* [S3b].

In parallel to this, SCER informed the development of the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework (NPF) launched in June 2018. As noted by the Deputy Director of the Government's Fair Work and Skills Division, *'Professor Findlay engaged closely with the Scottish Government's Chief Statistician to make successfully an evidence-based case for the inclusion of skills utilisation as an indicator in our National Performance Framework, drawing on SCER research to do so. Having this indicator means that the Scottish Government not only measures skills utilisation, but sees its improvement as a policy focus'* [S1b]. Endorsement of the *'Fair Work Framework emphasis on effective voice'* and commitment *'to supporting the expansion of collective bargaining'* is also stressed [S1b], with the STUC welcoming its inclusion in the NPF [S4]. Insights from SCER's research were also incorporated into the report of the Scottish Parliament Economy,



Energy and Tourism Committee 2015 inquiry into the quality of employment in Scotland. Quoting Findlay's written submission and oral evidence (given June 2015) numerous times, the report pushed for a *'firm commitment towards employee engagement and encouraging the strong management and leadership skills needed to improve the workforce in improving its own wellbeing'* and recommended that the Government *'embed these aims in all the employment business support programmes it funds'* [S5]. This led the Government to integrate fair work in its 2015 statutory guidance on the selection of tenderers and award of contracts, which was supplemented with procurement best practice guidance and a toolkit for public bodies and suppliers in 2018 [S6].

### **Driving the implementation and monitoring of fair work**

Since establishing the Fair Work Framework in 2016, the Fair Work Convention (co-chaired by Findlay from 2017) has played a key role in advancing Scotland's fair work agenda. By providing advice and guidance, developing networks and alliances, undertaking research and monitoring, the group has enabled sustained progress to be made. While much is still to be done to make fair work a reality for all workers and employers across Scotland, with the Convention itself noting that faster action is required if Scotland is to become a world-leading 'Fair Work Nation' by 2025, advances in a number of areas have been made. These are outlined in the Fair Work in Scotland report, published in December 2020, which introduces the Fair Work Convention's Measurement Framework consisting of 39 indicators to reflect the multidimensional nature of fair work and facilitate detailed monitoring [S7a]. Drawing on the latest Official Statistics (including the Labour Force Survey and Annual Population Survey, and the Scottish Employers Skills Survey) and ensuring statistical significance to provide robust and reliable information, the report evidences improvements across 14 of the indicators between 2015/16 and 2019/20. Though potentially attributable to multiple influences, these improvements are specifically in areas prioritised by the Convention in seeking to drive change, such as in relation to security of employment and income, and effective voice. With the Scottish Government actively pursuing this, the overall measure of employment security in Scotland (comprising security of contract, pay and hours) has improved from 54.5% of workers in 2015 to 63.9% of workers in 2019. Similarly, the commitment to effective voice as a key element of workplace quality has seen a rise in the proportion of workers whose terms and conditions are covered by collective bargaining in Scotland from 34.9% in 2015 to 38% in 2019, as well as a pledge by the Scottish Government to establish national collective bargaining in social care [S7a].

Various initiatives involving SCER have contributed to these improvements, namely sectoral research highlighting particular challenges and priority areas for action, and the development of an employee self-assessment tool and a benchmarking tool to support employers' in delivering fair work. Seeking to ensure that fair work is embedded in the delivery of social care services (a sector which employs 7.7% of the Scottish labour force), the Convention established a Social Care Inquiry in January 2017. Overseen by a Social Care Working Group (comprising 10 members, including Professor Lindsay) and encompassing SCER research on how frontline workers and their managers feel about their day to day work [R4], the inquiry made recommendations to improve employee voice, representation and terms and conditions which are being implemented by the Scottish Government [S7b]. Reflecting on the progress made to date, UNISON Scotland's Regional Manager notes that this *'is founded upon a recent consensus that enhanced job quality is key to the type of stable workforce required to obtain returns on skills investment, to elevate the status of care work, thereby increasing the quality and capacity of care in Scotland. All that traces back to specific findings and recommendations from Findlay/SCER research'* [S8]. Similar work to develop a Fair Work Charter for the construction industry to improve the practices of contractors and sub-contractors is also underway, involving the Scottish Government, Scottish Futures Trust and industry partners [S4a,b]. In addition, at the request of the Scottish Partnership Forum (SPF) in 2018, SCER undertook a review of partnership working in NHS Scotland which informed efforts to progress the *'partnership at all levels to support a more holistic approach to the delivery of health and social care services'* [S9].

To support employers to embed fairer working practices, the Government published a Fair Work Action Plan in February 2019 which sets out a range of measures including a benchmarking tool to assess current practice (developed with input from Findlay), a refreshed Scottish Business Pledge aligned more closely to Fair Work principles, a new learning network, and an international Fair Work Summit. It also contains a commitment to *'extend Fair Work criteria to every type of grant, funding stream and business support budget'* [S10a]. As reported by the Advisory Group on

Economic Recovery in 2020, this Fair Work First approach ‘to the award of business support grants has been phased in by the enterprise bodies and the Scottish Government’ [S10b]. Highlighting the benefits of this, the Director of Human Resources at Skills Development Scotland points ‘to numerous examples...where Fair Work ideals have been embedded into the skills action plans developed with businesses’ which have enabled them ‘to grow through improving their staff and including them in decision making processes’ [S1c]. Public agencies have also reaped rewards from embedding fair work into their employment practices. According to the Director of Strategy Services at Scottish Enterprise, which employs approximately 1,200 staff, ‘both internally and in service delivery, we have made significant changes in response to the Fair Work Framework, and these have delivered benefits to the businesses we interact with, and to our staff’ [S1d].

The principles of fair work have also underpinned the Scottish Government response to the coronavirus pandemic. According to the Deputy Director of the Fair Work and Skills Division, the ‘commitment to ensuring effective voice, and more broadly to fair work, has been at the heart of our Covid-19 response. The ethos of the Fair Work Framework – solving collective problems through voice, collaboration and dialogue – is now embedded in various ways and processes through which Scotland deals with lockdown, post-lockdown restart and future economic recovery. The Advisory Group on Economic Recovery has also stressed the importance of embedding fair work in Scotland’s longer-term economic recovery, and the Scottish Government is actively working to deliver on their recommendations’ [S1b]. This is reflected in actions to establish tripartite voice channels for restart and recovery, address variations in experiences during the pandemic for groups with protected characteristics, and attach fair work conditionality to Covid-19 support [S10b]. Furthermore, as noted in a joint statement on ‘Fair work during the transition out of lockdown’ issued in July 2020: ‘Adopting Fair Work practices has helped to guide employers and workers in agreeing fair and flexible practices. We have already seen the value of this approach to decision making in responding to the crisis so far, and the efforts being made across all sectors is hugely appreciated’ [S10c]. As part of this, ‘a protocol between the Scottish Government and the civil service unions has been developed on how they will work together during the coronavirus crisis’ which ‘sets the expectations for an approach to be taken across the civil service sector and promoted more widely across the public sector and beyond’ [S10c].

##### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- S1** Factual statements from **a.** Former Permanent Secretary to the Scottish Government, dated 11/10/20 **b.** Deputy Director, Fair Work and Skills Division, Scottish Government, dated 22/02/21 **c.** Director of Human Resources, Skills Development Scotland, dated 12/10/20 **d.** Director of Strategy Services, Scottish Enterprise, dated 16/10/20.
- S2** **a.** Factual statement from Chair, Working Together Review, dated 11/10/20 **b.** Working Together Review (2014) [Working Together Review: Progressive workplace policies in Scotland](#) **c.** Scottish Government (2015) [Working together for a fairer Scotland: Scottish Government response to the Working Together Review](#).
- S3** **a.** Fair Work Convention (2016) [The Fair Work Framework](#) **b.** Factual statement from Co-chair of The Fair Work Convention, dated 5/10/20.
- S4** **a.** Scottish Trade Union Congress (STUC) website, ‘Fair Work’ [accessed 7/03/21]. **b.** SCER (2020) [Facing the future constructively? The experience of work in the construction industry in Scotland. A report for STUC](#).
- S5** Scottish Parliament Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee (2016) [Taking the high road – work, wages and wellbeing in the Scottish labour market](#), SP Paper 874, published 14/01/16.
- S6** Scottish Government (2015) [Fair work practices and the award of public contracts: statutory guidance](#); (2018) [Best Practice Guidance on Addressing Fair Work Practices, including the Real Living Wage, in Procurement](#); (2018) [Fair work practices in procurement: toolkit](#).
- S7** **a.** Fair Work Convention (2020) [Fair Work in Scotland](#) **b.** Fair Work Convention (2019) [Fair Work in Scotland’s Social Care Sector](#).
- S8** Factual statement from Regional Manager, Unison Scotland, dated 18/10/20.
- S9** Scottish Partnership Forum Review of Partnership Working in NHS Scotland. Combined file with [review webpage](#), [SCER report](#) (January 2018) and [SPF Co-Chairs response](#) (August 2019).
- S10** **a.** Scottish Government (2019) [Fair Work Action Plan](#) **b.** Advisory Group on Economic Recovery (2020) [Towards a Robust, Resilient Wellbeing Economy for Scotland](#) **c.** Scottish Government (2020) [Covid-19: Fair work during the transition out of lockdown joint statement](#).