

Family Friendly Accreditation Welcome Pack

Accreditation Aims

The Award is a robust accreditation scheme that supports and encourages ongoing quality development in organisations, allowing them to demonstrate commitment to and understanding of the family in modern society. Families and communities can be confident that our accredited organisations will be signed up to family friendly practices and will be able to demonstrate the business benefits that arise from these practices.

Approach

Our quality framework and assessment tool will support a stepped change process of continuous quality improvement within organisations. Starting with a baseline introductory or entry-level accreditation scheme, member organisations will be able to demonstrate real commitment to families internally through support for employees and externally through an improved customer facing offer. The creativity and enthusiasm of our accredited member organisations is channelled through the scheme towards more advanced levels of family friendly practices, competence and quality.

Partnerships

The accreditation framework and award has been developed in consultation with our members and draws on the expertise and views of families, the wider knowledge and skills of the Family & Childcare Trust, and input from specialist HR organisations.

Overarching Principles

The Overarching Principles of Family Friendly Accreditation within the workforce and business community are that:

- The changing demographic of our population brings about challenges and opportunities for individuals, families, organisations and communities. By planning for and addressing these issues through creative and inclusive methods, the individual's experience is enhanced and business can optimise the potential of its workforce and markets
- Individuals within the workforce need to be regarded as an integral part of the business and society, which places responsibilities and expectations upon them
- Developing organisational methods that help to balance work/life and wider responsibilities is mutually beneficial to individual, the organisation and to wider society
- More flexibility in the way that people work has been proven to save businesses money and resources while improving employee engagement and well-being and so there is a need for business to explore ways of supporting and enabling innovation in how they achieve their business outcomes.

- Employees should not be expected to ignore or overlook their wider responsibilities to their families and community in order to secure employment or progression in the workplace
- Just meeting minimum legal standards will not fully support mutual benefit for the organisation or employees long term
- The individual is valued as a positive asset to the business or organisation.

The Overarching Principles of Family Friendly Accreditation within the marketplace are that:

- Customers should receive a service that is accessible and takes into account society's changing personal, psychological and physical needs
- Services and environments should be welcoming and fit for purpose
- Customers should be confident that those serving or supporting them will be suitably trained, approachable and able to understand their needs
- Customers should be involved with developing and planning services and systems that affect them wherever possible
- The customer voice is valued.

What the standards cover

Organisations and systems differ widely in their structure, funding, workforce profile and service and product offer, even within the same sphere of interest or activity. The standards therefore currently centre on internal aspects of planning, development, organisational culture and workforce engagement plus external or customer facing experiences, accessibility, sensitivity to needs and facilities.

Rather than offering a tick-box format against a specific set of criteria, Family Friendly Accreditation offers member organisations an opportunity to work with us to:

- Consider their baseline position
- Set organisationally sensitive and relevant priorities
- Self-assess against a number of developmental standards that aim to promote year-on-year improvement and benefit.

The standards cover these domains:

Basic membership requirements

Basic legal requirements pertaining to employment law and rights such as minimum wage, rest and leave entitlements; comprehensive equity and diversity systems; equality of opportunity based on ability; accessibility to services and environments; compliance with all relevant health and safety legislation; safeguarding of younger and vulnerable people; risk management and specific legal guidelines or legislation pertaining to a specific organisation type or business.

All (100%) of these basic or Type One standards need to be met before the member organisation can undertake full accreditation.

Domains for Full Accreditation

- Strategic planning and development
- Organisational delivery and operations
- Communication and engagement
- Environment and access
- Case studies

Reflecting on the views of those developing and delivering

We know that those working in and with business alongside those who use services and systems have the best understanding of the issues, opportunities and challenges facing individuals, families and communities. The standards have been developed from relevant policies, guidelines and research literature in consultation with and by working with our membership.

Our commitment to quality, development and review

We aim to review the standards annually to ensure that they continue to reflect development in law, policy and changes to markets and systems. The first set of standards will be published following pilot in 2014 and these will be reviewed in April 2015.

How we measure performance against the standards

The full set of standards and criteria are aspirational and it is unlikely that any of our members would meet all of them. Therefore our members are categorised against each standard at one of three levels.

Type 1: 100% of these standards has to be achieved before the organisation can undertake accreditation. This is because these standards pertain to basic legalities and supportive systems, so we would expect any member of Family Friendly to have achieved these as a matter of necessity. If for any reason (either on application for membership or when applying for accreditation) an organisation is found to be unable to meet all the required Type 1 standards the Family Friendly team will assist and support them to do so.

Type 2: Standards that an accredited organisation would expect to meet.

Type 3: Standards that an exemplar member organisation would meet and accredited member organisations would aim towards as part of their continuing development in family friendly practice.

How Accreditation Works

All existing members and those applying to join will have a set timeframe for becoming accredited with Family Friendly. They will be expected to have applied for and completed the accreditation process within 12 months of becoming a member. Accreditation needs to be updated every two years, unless there are significant changes to the organisation or its systems in which case accreditation review can be requested earlier.

Phases of Accreditation

- Application for membership or formal accreditation
- Development of an Initial Position Statement including identification of policies to be reviewed by the specialty HR team
- Self-assessment against the standards and submission of supporting evidence
- Review of application by the Family Friendly Team and randomised audit of supporting evidence
- Follow up quality audit check such as 'Mystery Shopper', workforce-based focus groups or structured interviews
- Accreditation or resubmission
- Celebration and invitation to join the network and media events.

Governance

Quality Standards Review Board

We have formed a Quality Standards Review Board comprising of representatives from our membership. We will review the standards annually to ensure that they continue to reflect development in law, policy and changes to markets and systems.

Family Friendly Accreditation Assessors Team

This team will draw upon the extensive expertise of the Family Friendly team and the research base of the wider Family & Childcare Trust, to ensure that all submitted accreditations are treated in a fair consistent and equitable manner. Policy documents to support his activity are available to members on request.

Appeals Process

We aim for local relationship-based discussion and resolution of any queries or concerns. However, to give confidence to our members and to our teams we have a formal appeals process in place to support members' requests for decision reviews or clarification. The final decision on such matters rests with the Family & Childcare Trust senior management team.

External Verification Process

An annual external verification process will allow audit of the Family Friendly Team's decision-making processes, quality review of submitted evidence and of reporting and recording systems. External verifiers will be independent and allocated by the responsible director from The Family & Childcare Trust.

Next Steps

Contact your Family Friendly account manager to begin completion of your Initial Position Statement. We look forward to working with you through your accreditation process.