

Bringing dignity and respect to the invisible workforce

A review of the cleaning taskforce and its products

Background

In August 2014, the Commission published [the Invisible Workforce](#), a report of our examination of employment practices in the cleaning sector.

We set up an [industry taskforce](#); bringing together cleaning and facilities management companies, professional bodies, client organisations that buy-in cleaning services, trade unions, regulators and government.

The aim of the taskforce was to tackle the poor practice highlighted by our research and, in October 2015, the cleaning taskforce launched three products reflecting this aim. Here we take a look at how the industry has taken up the challenge.

Dignity and respect

The taskforce developed the #seethevalue [poster campaign](#) to encourage people to recognise cleaning operatives and the work they do. Taskforce members have taken a range of actions to promote dignity and respect including:

- the British Institute of Cleaning Science integrated the dignity and respect and rights awareness materials into its training resources available to its 10,000 members
- reproducing the posters in their staff magazines and promoting the campaign in their own and their clients' workplaces.

Standing up for workplace rights

The taskforce developed a [know your rights at work](#) campaign to improve awareness of workplace rights among workers and managers and to support managers to have better conversations with their teams. The briefing pack was the most frequently downloaded cleaning project resource from the Commission's website.

Taskforce members have embedded the campaign resources in their own policies and practices by:

- including the 'know your rights at work' resources in their induction and training programmes
- making the 'know your rights' leaflets available through pay slips, staff magazines and trade union members resources
- investing in staff surveys and staff meetings to understand the experiences and concerns of cleaning operatives
- promoting the taskforce's products and messages across the industry, for example, 2,000 delegates to the Manchester Cleaning Show took away the 'know your rights at work' packs.

Responsible procurement

The taskforce developed [responsible procurement principles](#) to guide public and private sector client organisations that buy in cleaning services. To promote these principles, taskforce members said that:

- client organisations had been integrating the responsible procurement principles into their procurement policies and practices
- the Business Services Association incorporated the responsible procurement principles when developing its Responsible Cleaning Provider Scheme. This commits members to promoting responsible procurement with the aim of supporting fair employment practices. BSA's cleaning forum represents about 130,000 staff.

Conclusions

The cleaning taskforce campaigns have reached a wide audience and made the cleaning workforce more visible and better respected. Working across the sector with leading businesses, unions and civil society organisations helped to make this campaign a success.