



supporting
social
employers

Committee Guide to EVH

A straightforward guide to
EVH and all of its activities



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Introduction

EVH supports employers who work to improve their communities and the environment. These employers are primarily housing associations but also include care and repair organisations, development trusts, credit unions, care providers and other social businesses and charities. This short guide explains how we operate and is aimed at Board and committee members, old and new.

EVH History

The company was launched in 1978 as the 'Glasgow Area Federation of Community Based Housing Associations', representing 9 local housing organisations who got together to jointly tackle the same employment issues they were all facing. Throughout the years the company grew, changing its name on occasion to reflect the growth in membership and wider geographical spread. Tying in with our 30th Anniversary in 2008, the decision was made to change from "Employers In Voluntary Housing" to simply "EVH" to encompass our wider variety of members and to help establish our 'supporting social employers' identity.

Joining EVH

EVH provides services primarily to member organisations who make a decision to join us to gain employer support. There are two types of membership, 'Full' and 'Associate', with the only difference being that "Full" members use our centrally agreed rates of pay for staff, whilst Associate members do their own thing on salaries. EVH's Executive or Management Committee decides who can join. Normally this is not a problem for any social business or charity.

So what are these services we offer?

Some of the main benefits to members are: support and advice on all employment issues; collective bargaining on wages and conditions of service; independent advice for committee and senior staff and an external appeal mechanism on discipline and grievance issues; in person support for complex issues; relevant training, events and conferences; recruitment services; free publications on current topics; access to the Employee Counselling Service; extensive Health & Safety service with helpline, control manual, information notes & a quarterly safety forum; and full on site audit every two years.

There are more but, to keep things simple, this image is how we would describe our services in a nutshell:



Membership Differences

- **Full members** can access all of our services, either free or at much reduced prices. They participate in our Collective Bargaining - this means that they agree to work with EVH each year to find a national agreement on nearly every aspect of wages and contracts for staff. In reality they will assess when they join whether the existing package is what they need, not only for just now but for the medium to long term. The benefit for such employers is that, provided they are happy with the outcomes of these national negotiations, they do not have to enter into what can be quite difficult and complicated matters at a local level. To ensure that members abide by these national agreements it is possible for staff, jointly or individually, to appeal to the national appeals tribunal to have the decisions implemented by their employer.



- **Associate members** can use all of our services but the difference is they decide for themselves what they want to do locally on wages and terms and conditions, though sometimes too with our bespoke assistance on local salary mechanisms. They obviously set this out in their contracts with their staff, and some mirror the agreements reached by EVH or most of these agreements. Some just want access to the general help and support of EVH staff and the reduced prices for accessing our other services, such as training, recruitment, or room hire. Associate members pay 90% of the normal annual fee charged to Full members.

Regardless of the membership category chosen, access to support covered by our Service Level Agreement is unlimited, including on-site support – we are always there when you need our help, and we don't charge travelling fees regardless of location.

Services and Consultancy

As well as the core services mentioned, we are always thinking of additional services to add further value to the membership package. Whilst some of these additional services attract a small charge, many of them are free to members. Some of our most popular are:-

- 360° Appraisal of Staff or Senior Managers
- Committee/Board member appraisal
- On-Site HR Surgeries
- Employee Engagement Survey
- Masterclasses: Attendance Management; Discipline & Grievance; Change; Performance; and Recruitment
- Induction for HR Managers
- Guides on: Restructuring, Attendance Management, Redundancy, TUPE, Discipline, Competencies ... and many more besides
- Pre-Tendering Advice
- Staff Restructuring
- Satisfaction Surveys
- Extensive range of Governance Tools and Training

How We Are Governed

Every member organisation of EVH can nominate a representative and substitute representative to our management committee. Whilst it is called the management committee, it is actually a sounding board or consultative group and all major decisions on collective bargaining issues are based on full members' ballots or formal general meetings. It meets around 9 or 10 times a year and full agendas are sent to all members' representatives and substitutes detailing the work of the various elected committees. This allows us to keep our members informed and for them to provide feedback either in writing or in person if they consider it necessary.

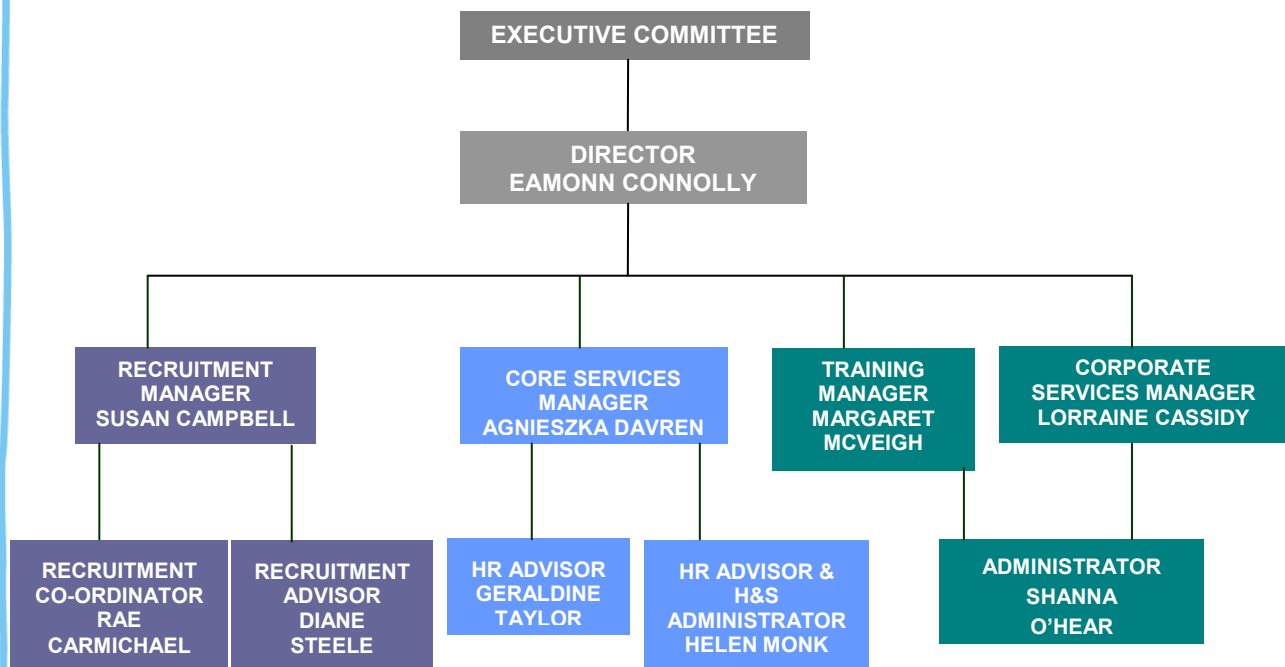
EVH is run pretty much along the same lines as its members, with a Board which we call the Executive Committee. This is made up of 15 representatives who are elected from **full** member organisations. Our Executive Committee then elect our office bearers. The chair can only hold office for a maximum period of 5 years.

The Executive also elect 4 sub committees to manage our business, these are:-

1. Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC): represents members (employers) in negotiations with UNITE union on wages and terms and conditions.
2. Education and Training Committee: makes decisions on events related business.
3. Audit Committee: oversees finances, value for money and performance.
4. Health & Safety: actively ensures compliance with our legal obligations.

EVH staff

The dedicated team of 10 at EVH has a small and uncomplicated structure:-



Communication with Members

EVH prints a newsletter called “Foundations” 3 times a year that is specifically aimed at committee members. We changed the format and content in 2008, making it even more relevant and interesting.



We also communicate directly most months with members through the agenda for our Management Committee meetings. We have started sending these agendas to senior officers so that they can flag up issues to Boards, committees, management, or staffing sub committees where appropriate. A list of dates for forthcoming Management Committee meetings is available on our website.

Every month bar January we send a very brief Members Monthly Report for inclusion on local Committee/Board meetings – these give an essential flavour of our work over recent/coming months and are popular with members.

We also send out a monthly Senior Staff Briefing to every member organisation which is intended to be an interesting mix of topical employment issues, developments in good practice, health and safety and an update of what is going on at EVH.

You can access the full range of model documents, policies, information notes and agreements on our website. Each member organisation has a unique user name and password – your senior staff will be able to give you a note of it.

In addition we provide information on events, services, health and safety and recruitment throughout the year. We do this in a combination of ways using mailings, email, phone calls or in person. We have in the last few years tried to get more information from members on the relevant contact person for us to keep in touch with at their organisation and this is allowing us to develop and improve our database. We sometimes use this to survey members throughout the year on general or specific issues.

EVH provide free “Surgeries” for both senior management teams, and for Committees/Boards of member organisations. These provide opportunities to discuss in more depth not just current but forthcoming issues where EVH can help or provide more support or guidance.

We issue a wide range of contemporary Briefings and Guides for Committee/Board (like this one you are reading now) on topical issues, and explaining EVH support available. There is no set pattern to these but ever popular offerings include the “Jargon Journal” and our famous “Committee Member Handbook”. EVH is the only committee member run organisation in housing and social employer sectors of Scotland, and as a result all of our publications typically hit the right note.

We also produce a huge array of more technical documents, including our health and safety control manual. A full list is available on our website, but particularly useful in a crisis are our guides on discipline, restructuring and redundancy.



Our Relationship with Members

Some people liken EVH to an insurance policy; they only need us when something goes wrong. Others see us as part of the team; they consult us as and when necessary on a regular basis throughout the year. This is quite helpful as we understand their business better and we can provide more informed support. Others are just happy to have us in the background providing information and managing the negotiations on employment matters.

We have significantly expanded our range of free services such as “HR induction” and “pre tendering for consultancy discussions” and “surgeries” so that the wealth of experience and knowledge available at EVH can be tapped into before big decisions are taken locally. It is not our role to lead on local strategy but rather we hope our up front support can only help improve the breadth of the discussion and the range of ways and means to approach the issues concerned.

When there are disputes, serious disciplinary or grievance issues EVH can come along and help with the process but we will not make the decision; that is for you as a member employer, although we do consider that it is important for us to explain the implications of decisions and the likely outcome. We are not consultants, we are here for the long term and, with this in mind, we will never offer here today/gone tomorrow solutions.

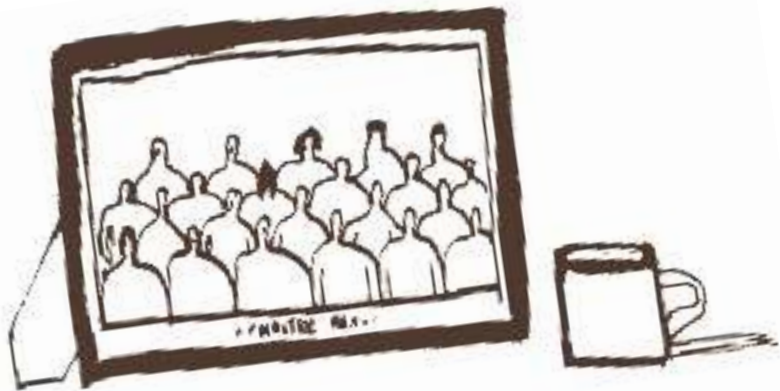
We have grown from 9 original members to well over 140 today by not just trying to help our members with individual matters but by looking out for them collectively and the wider interests of social employers throughout Scotland.

What is expected of members?

Each year EVH sends a membership pack out to member organisations in December as our membership subscription runs from January for 12 months. For the last 10 or so years we have had a service level agreement in our pack that outlines what we will do, but also what we expect in return from our members.

This depends on what type of membership you choose, for example Full members are asked to pay their annual subscription; communicate with us on relevant issues; participate in EVH structures; uphold EVH agreements; abide by JNC decisions on individual grievances and discipline; and recognise the trade union.

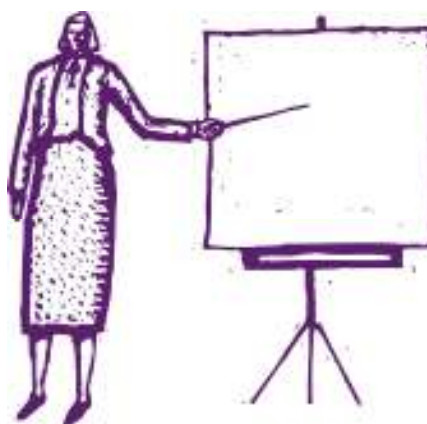
Associates will not be required to fully participate in our structures nor to uphold our collective bargaining agreements.



EVH Annual Events

EVH Annual Conference

This is a straight from the roots EVH event which harks back to when we only had housing member organisations. While the speakers cover nearly every topic that would be of interest to a lay member or senior officer of any of our member organisations, it is not untypical for 90%+ of the 250 delegates to be from housing associations.



Committee Members Seminar and Annual General Meeting

Our second oldest annual event is a seminar which is now normally held immediately before our Annual General Meeting in late March or early April. It offers a mix of catching up with new developments and introductory and more challenging sessions. It is not unusual for a group of new and old committee members from member organisations to come along together.

Social Employers Conference (with SHARE)

This event used to be known as our 'Personnel Conference', it is a real success for collaborative working between EVH and SHARE, the training body. Each year a really diverse group of top notch speakers from the illustrious to the practitioner discuss people issues with a group of around 100 staff and committee.

Senior Officers in Housing Conference

This is an invitation only event held every year in the late autumn when the local authority, senior government and lobby organisations come together with around 20-25 senior officers of housing associations to discuss and debate the burning issues of the moment. It has resulted in real developments in policy and practice in recent years, so not just a talking shop.

EVH Guide to Training

We provide a comprehensive choice of in-house training for our member organisations. This is mainly on employment issues, and now includes master-classes in all contemporary matters including: discipline and grievance; performance; change management; and attendance.

Of particular interest to committee members are our training sessions on appraising the senior officer and the role of the committee as an employer. The health and safety awareness training for committee is another essential one. We also run a (free) quarterly professional development forum for health & safety staff. The Guide gives details of all training and any applicable charges.

Most members consider the availability of tailored in-house training on various subjects to be the most effective way of delivering and considering the topics. However we also often carry out such training for groups of neighbouring members upon request.

Recruitment

We have a small dedicated team who help our members in a variety of ways with the crucial task of getting the right people into their organisation. Firstly we will **advertise** your vacancies to people looking for jobs across the UK (mainly Scotland). Our weekly bulletin goes out to close on 5,000 email addresses and is undoubtedly forwarded on to many more beyond. Our website also provides an easily accessible route for downloading job application packs.

Secondly we have a register of suitable candidates to fill **temporary vacancies** - everything from reception, admin and housing specific roles to acting Chief Executives. Whether it is ill health, maternity cover or unusually high workloads, we can provide someone from a week to a year to fill that gap.

Finally we provide a very comprehensive **consultancy** service to help you fill your vacancies, which can simply mean handling the administration of the recruitment process, or writing your adverts, job descriptions, etc. and helping you with the interviews and testing of candidates. For senior staff we are the market leader in this role and have filled the majority of such posts in Scotland in housing associations over the last 10 years.

Helen McGregor Award



From the mid '90's EVH has run some form of committee award to recognise the voluntary contribution in Scotland by Board and committee members. In 2009 we revamped this as the Helen McGregor Award to recognise significant contributions by Board or committee members from any social employer in Scotland.

Helen was our chair from the late '80's until 1997 and won the award in 2000. Her exemplary service to her local community as a councillor, first shareholder, Chair and President of Shettleston Housing Association and her service on SHARE, SFHA and EVH were in her eyes more important than her MBE. Sadly she died in 2007 and we thought this was a fitting recognition of her contribution.

EVH Room Hire

In a nice addition to our other services, we are also able to offer meeting rooms for hire at our Glasgow city centre office space. Our largest, Betty's Room, holds a maximum of 50 theatre style (with flexible layouts for smaller numbers) and the other, our Green Room, is boardroom set up for 8 (or a cosy 10). The integrated AV set up in Betty's Room, with induction loop system, is included in the room hire rate. Room hire is available to both members and non-members, but any of our members making a booking will enjoy a 20% reduction on the normal rates.

Summary

Our mission is simply to support social employers. In doing this we have adopted these principles of practice: we put our customers first; pursue excellence; create an environment of openness and trust; respect confidentiality; make ourselves accessible and respond quickly to all requests for information and assistance; treat everyone fairly and with respect; use resources cost effectively and within budgets; and last but not least we continue to develop a highly motivated and committed workforce able to deliver our services courteously, efficiently and effectively.

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