

Strengthening the human dimensions of property

The Ethical Property Foundation offers property advice to charities and small organisations that prioritises the issue of access. It now offers a sought after award for ethical workplaces.

by Antonia Swinson

Property should be managed for the benefit of people and planet. This is the core vision which drove the Ethical Property Foundation into being back in 2004, under the auspices of sister company, the Ethical Property Company. From day one, work centred on supporting charities and small community groups with high-quality property advice, and 3,000 clients later this remains our core charitable work.

However this defining vision encompassed an ambition to engage with the property industry as an advocate for a robust ethical approach to property management. After five years of research and development, and consultation with over 50 property companies and leading agencies, the Fair Place Award, our new ethical workplace accreditation was finally launched late last year. Fair Place evidences a company's commitment to the people in the building including contractors' staff; the community around the front doors as well as the environment. Awardees now include workplaces owned or run by CAFOD, Kingston University, Sodexo and most recently RBS. And the Ethical Property Foundation is now working with a range of corporates and industry membership bodies that are currently undergoing the application process.

Companies apply for a range of reasons, and Fair Place is a workplace not a corporate accreditation, which measures practical, on the ground best practice. Some see it as a business improvement tool that measures best practice across a range of departments – including facilities management, procurement, finance, human resources and corporate social responsibility, showing up gaps and duplication. Others see it as a practical measure of social responsibility and sustainability. Then there are those seeking a cost-effective measure of social value useful when pitching for public sector contracts with social value clauses; others see it as a tool for attracting the best graduates and building the team.



Whatever the reason, what we know from client feedback is that Fair Place puts both workplace and people in it at the heart of business reporting and planning, in a holistic and comprehensive process of engagement.

'We believe that the Fair Place award could become like the Living Wage Accreditation or the Fairtrade mark – something that businesses aspire to as a symbol of best practice and a demonstration of their authentic CSR commitment.'

Al Lewis Facilities Manager at CAFOD (among the first organisations to be awarded Fair Place).

So what does Fair Place measure? To be eligible your organisation must pay the Living Wage to both staff and contractors' staff, as well as allow right of representation. You can be a landlord or a tenant. There is a top score of 100 with a 50 pass rate and each award lasts three years. Annual licences start at £500 for micro enterprises and are based on the numbers of employees in the workplace.

Assessments cover sections on people, community and environment, including how you engage with your team for health and well-being as well as access provision across a range of disabilities. Each assessment is undertaken on a volunteer basis by senior property professionals who believe in our charitable work. We also offer site visits and an assisted application service for busy managers.

