

EMPOWERMENT IN SOCIAL FIRMS

THIS PRESENTATION

- A word about definitions
- Empowerment in Social Firms
- Interdependence of enterprise, employment and empowerment
- The importance of a holistic approach
- Some examples

Want to talk about:

What we mean when we say social firm / empowerment

How empowerment is a core value of the Social Firms sector in the UK

Importance of taking a holistic approach

Examples of what this means in practice

Definitions in the UK

In a SOCIAL FIRM:

- at least 25% of the employees have experienced severe labour market disadvantage
- at least 50% of income is generated through trade and profits are re-invested.
- Social Firms create jobs.

In a WORK INTEGRATION SOCIAL ENTERPRISE (WISE)

- activities and services are provided that increase future employment opportunities

I'll be talking about social firms, but many of the points I make are equally valid for WISEs.

Empowerment = ?

“ Empowerment is the process of increasing the capacity of individuals to make choices, and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes.

Central to this process are actions that build individual and collective assets, and improve the efficiency and fairness of the organisational and institutional context which govern the use of these assets”

World Bank

Lots of different definitions – covering spiritual growth to organisational and community development . Could spend the rest of this presentation simply looking at definitions!

This definition by the World Bank is one that we think covers the elements well and can be seen to be relevant to Social Firms

Empowerment for the



Empowerment is the process of
increasing the capacity of individuals
to make choices, and to transform
those choices into desired actions and

Let's break down the key elements of this definition

- First there's individual empowerment
- Enabling and equipping individual to make their own decisions and develop their capacity to reach their goals.

Empowerment for the



Central to this process are actions that **build** individual and collective **assets**, and **improve** the **efficiency and fairness** of the organisational and institutional context which g
use of these assets.



Impact at organisational level

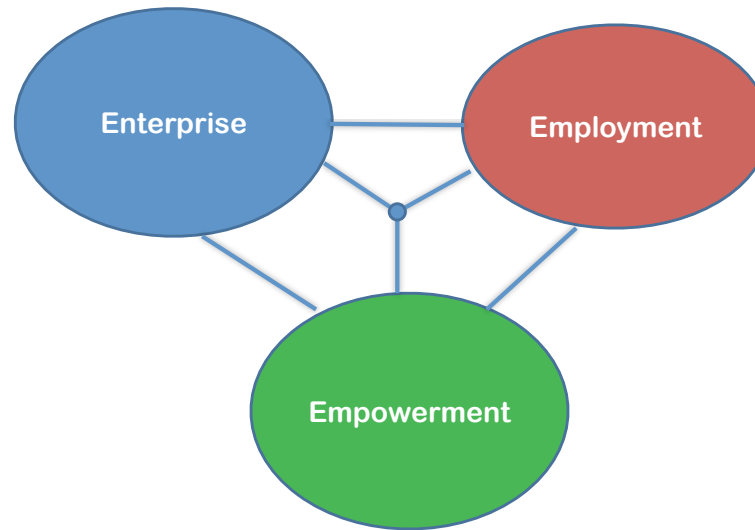
- strengthens organisation through
- Team work
- Support for individuals
- Access to more skills - more efficiency
- Develops and reinforces fairness



Social Firms UK identified 3 core values, in consultation with organisations in the sector :-

As our logo shows - empowerment is one of the three Social Firms UK values of Enterprise Employment and Empowerment

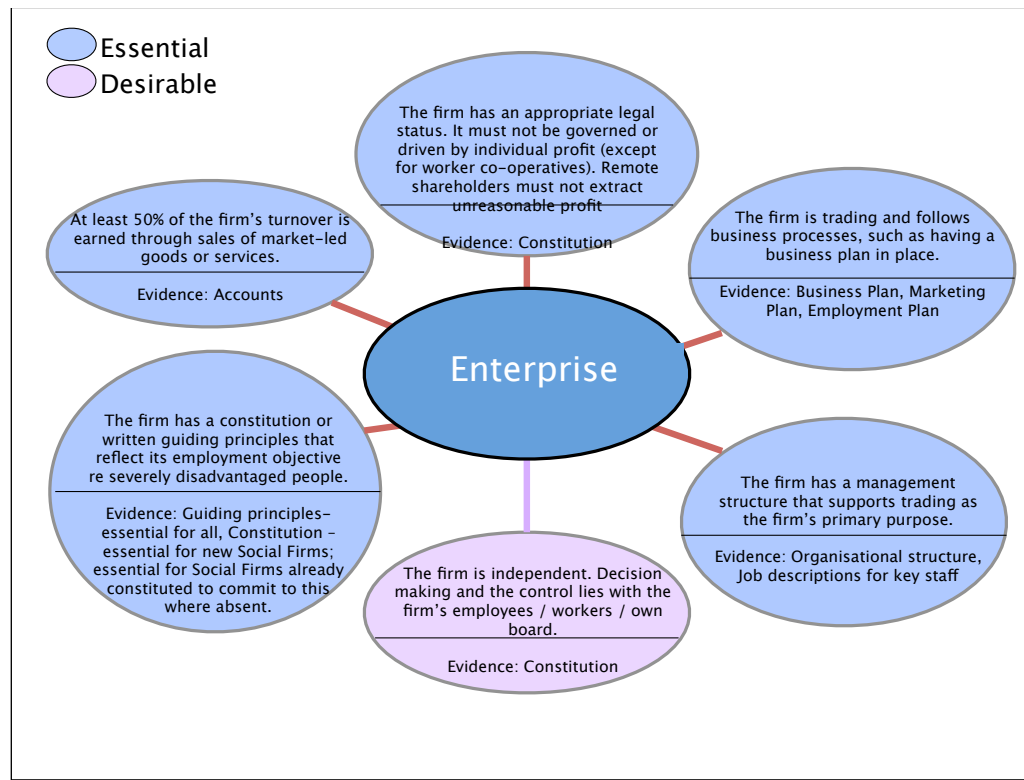
Social Firms Values



Taken together, they form the essence of a social firm.

Need all three elements to be a social firm.

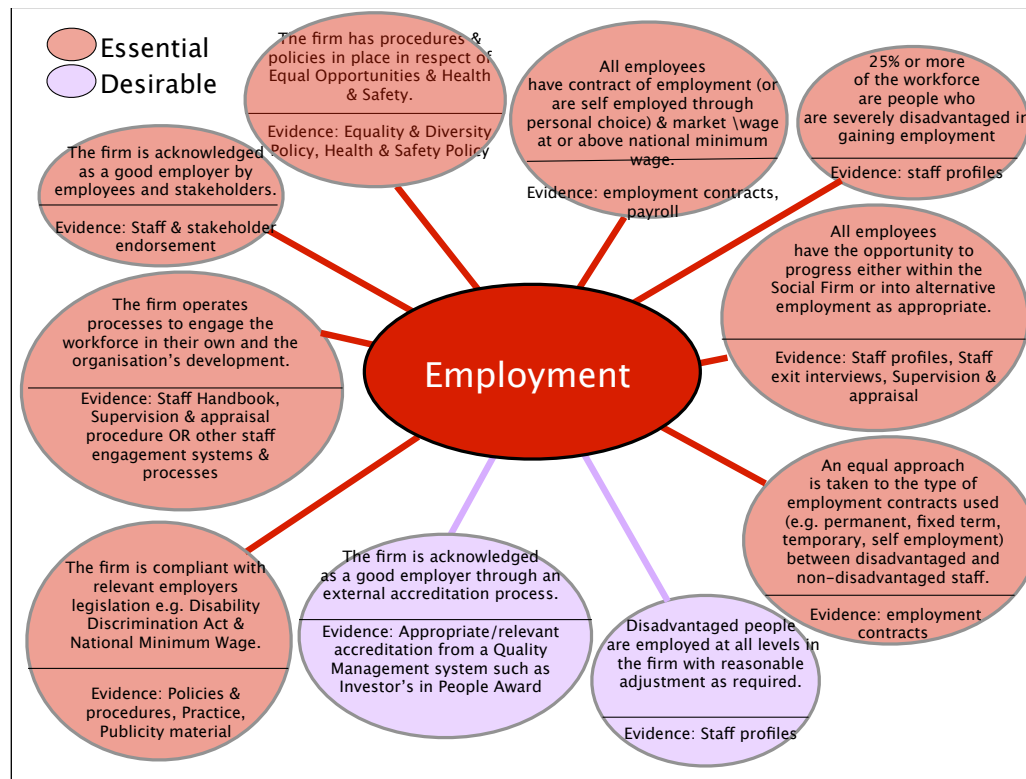
We developed a checklist that shows best practice for social firm in making a reality of these values..



KNOW IT'S TOO SMALL FOR PEOPLE TO READ, CAN EMAIL LINKS TO ANYONE WHO WANTS.

[Won't go into detail but] here is the checklist for enterprise
 Without "enterprise" a social firm cannot be sustainable , and so cannot offer opportunities to disabled people.
 Empowered staff can contribute to the future development of the enterprise, and wherever possible employees or co-workers in co-operatives should have a role to play in decision making.

Re-dialogue project



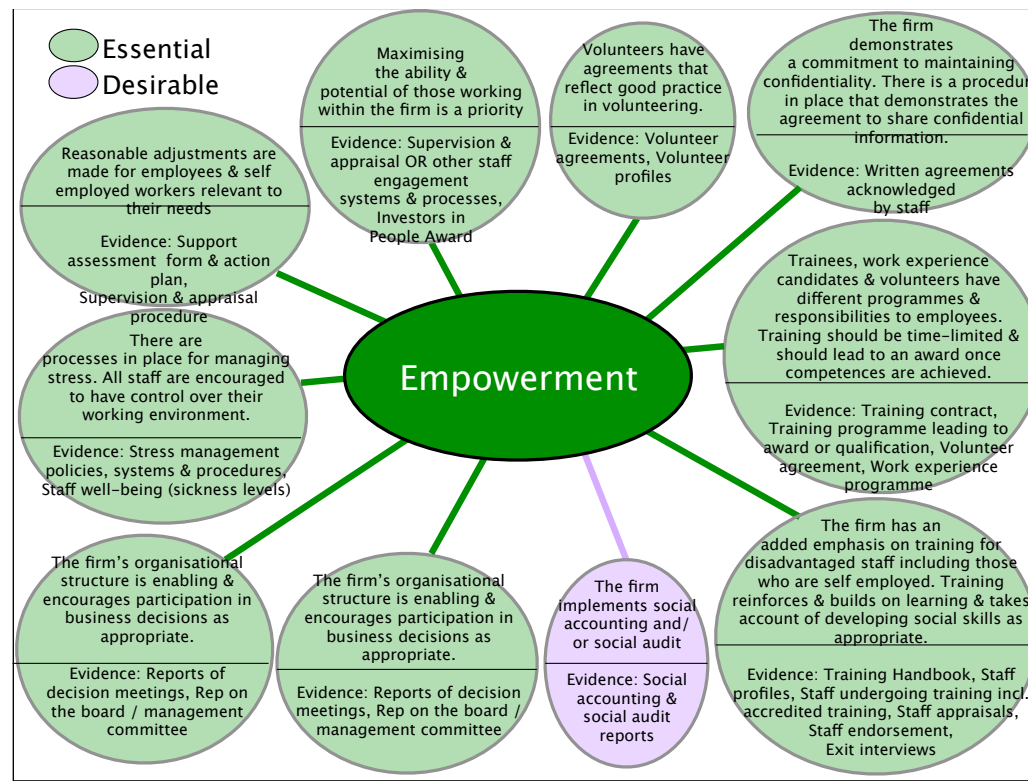
And here is employment.

The key here is that work should be “real work” – individuals need to be able to make a real contribution, if they are to develop their capacity and skills. This then provides the employee with further potential for progression and greater empowerment.

Good team working is vital – Many social firm employees have faced stigma and social exclusion, so it’s important to be inclusive in the way work is organised. Better team work also means better results.

For people whose goal is to move into mainstream employment, the closer their experience is to that type of employment the better.

Another key feature of a social firm is that it offers a supportive working environment. Part of that support is that each employee is gains recognition for the contribution that they make – the working environment and working and management practices need to be supportive



And this one focuses on some key elements of that demonstrate the how a Social Firm can have systems that empower their employees.

The key criteria are:

- Social Firm gives priority to maximising ability and potential of its workers
- Reasonable adjustments are made to meet employee's specific needs. For example, being flexible around intermittent health issues
- The roles of employees are different from those of trainees and volunteers – who should have their own agreements, that are drawn up to reflect good practice.
- There is an added emphasis on training in many social firms. This can be informal, through on-the-job job coaching as an introduction, but should ideally lead to an award once competences are reached.
- In social firms that follow the intermediate labour market model, there should be a strong emphasis on transferable skills.
- Peer support can be very effective, but should be structured so that there is a positive experience for all.
- The firm's organisational structure encourages participation in business decisions

MICHELE : YOU MAY WANT TO:

- MENTION STAR SOCIAL FIRM QUALITY STANDARD IS BASED ON THE CHECKLIST
- ASK PEOPLE TO LET YOU KNOW IF THEY WANT COPIES OF THE CHECKLIST

Y

Take a holistic approach



Empowerment also means address the barriers that affect people's ability to work.

These vary according to the individual and their circumstances but can involve:
debt, housing, childcare, criminal records. Etc

Important to cater for the individual, and to work in partnership with other agencies.

Some Good Practice

- Mi-enterprise
 - Supported self-employment for people with learning disabilities
 - dev.mienterprise.org.uk
- Blue Sky Regeneration and Development
 - Must have a criminal record to work there
 - All supervisors have first hand experience of the barriers ex-offenders face and have overcome them, so can help team members

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