



Likewise

Website: likewise.org.uk

Location: London

Founded: 1988

Legal structure: Charity, company limited by guarantee

Description of services: social care, mental health; supporting wellbeing, community and independent living

Employees: 13 full-time, 10 part-time

Volunteers: 180 per year, around 20 at any one time

Overview

Likewise has a 30-year history of working alongside people from all backgrounds and circumstances to support community wellbeing and help individuals navigate life. Likewise provides support and care to those living with mental ill-health, social isolation and homelessness. It is constantly working on building an inclusive community that is about acceptance, belonging and being human together.

Good work practices

Good working conditions are crucial to creating a skilled and motivated workforce. As part of a **research study**, Middlesex University explored good work practices at Likewise across seven dimensions. The findings also informed the development of a '**Pathways to good work**' **toolkit** with Locality which sets out the practical steps that community businesses can take to improve job quality in their organisation.

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Meaningful work is where you have a sense of contributing to something bigger than yourself, and whether that's somebody else's wellbeing or [...] being able to think about really interesting ideas and then apply them in reality, I think it's a beautiful part of my role in particular, but I think all of my job is a really cool thing. And being able to support people, wonderful, but actually having all of that in a network of open, honest warm relationships, that's a whole other kind of springboard to it.

Staff member

1. Meaningful work

Staff and volunteers spoke of the important attraction for them of Likewise's social mission and values and the "satisfaction and increased wellbeing gained from doing useful work for others". However, as another employee pointed out, "meaningful work also has to include some sense of movement or growth for me and I imagine for most people". Through regular conversations, the demands and challenges of different roles and contributions can be better understood and supported. Underpinning this is a shared organisational philosophy that meaningful work comes through meaningful relationships.



It's a bit simplistic to think that working for a good worthwhile cause is enough to make it good work and I think, for me, balance is the word or thing, you know, balance of energy, a job where work doesn't take more from you than it gives.

Staff member

2. Voice, democratic governance and inclusive culture

Inclusive decision-making and engagement with employees and community stakeholders is integral to the organisation's foundational principles, as well as the workplace culture. One employee argued that Likewise has got "a really strong culture with a very strong team" and that, through the pandemic, colleagues had "grown even closer together through honesty about feelings, fears, sharing needs and concerns". Staff were used to weekly face-to-face supervision pre-pandemic. However, when it became too challenging to maintain this high level of communication and support virtually, supervision was reduced to bi-weekly sessions. Staff felt that this was not enough and, as a great example of mutuality, introduced a peer-support group in 'off' weeks to better meet their needs.

3. Contracts and job design

The organisation offers part- and full-time fixed-term and permanent contracts, depending on the role and funding source. Regular supervision with staff and informal conversations provide the opportunity to raise any concerns about the workload and any challenges so that adjustments can be made as needed. Everyone has not only the core functions of their role but also the opportunity to respond to challenges and opportunities they see across the organisation, following their interest and developing skills accordingly.

4. Pay and benefits

Likewise is an accredited Living Wage Employer and provides other benefits in line with statutory requirements. While wages on average are at the higher end for the sector, funding creates some limitations. Flexible working and good holiday allowance are felt as a real benefit. Staff can structure their time in a way that suits their life and work, and have 36 days holiday allowance increasing a day per year worked, up to a total of 40 days. Overall, the cultural benefit of encouraging people to bring their whole self to work, and making space for everyone's humanity, is what really encourages staff to commit their time to Likewise.

5. Skills and development

Continuous learning is core to how Likewise supports the development of its staff and volunteers. Formal training opportunities for staff are provided as required. More experienced staff also provide on-the-job training and mentoring for less experienced and new staff which is often better tailored to the needs of the job than formal training courses, and has the positive side-effect of providing developmental opportunities for those mentoring staff. It also helps to build or strengthen staff relationships and thereby further improves the workplace culture. In addition, all employees that have been with Likewise for at least a year receive a learning budget of £500 that they can spend on their personal development, which can include learning that is not directly related to their job role.



We believe everyone is engaged in a constant process of learning, and that such a process is fundamental to wellbeing – it is through learning about ourselves and others that we are able to make space for change.

Co-director

6. Flexible working, work–life balance and family-friendly support

At Likewise staff are encouraged to manage their working time in a way that best combines the needs of their professional role with their personal life. Pre-Covid, being present in a shared work space was the norm, but adapting to the pandemic through increasingly digitalising services has seen more flexible hours and the normalisation of home working. This has particularly helped those with children to combine their work and parental responsibilities more effectively. However, while some staff have felt home working has led to improved work–life balance and wellbeing, others still prefer to work in the office and to engage more directly with service users (see Section 7). Although Likewise is planning to maintain some of its service provision online and via telephone, one of the co-directors pointed out, “nothing can replace face-to-face contact, it will always have to be a mix”.

7. Health and wellbeing

Likewise has learned from the pandemic how continuous home working can lead to staff feeling isolated and detached from the organisation and its user community, prompting efforts to maintain the lines of communication more effectively, for example with peer support. More positively, benefits of home working during lockdown have included staff being able to use the time saved by not having to commute for physical activities such as walking and running, and so increasing their physical fitness and overall wellbeing. They are planning to keep up this routine beyond Covid-19, facilitated through opportunities to work from home more often. What maintains emotional wellbeing at work is an emphasis on shared humanity and prioritising relationships. Through its cultural agreements, practices and values, Likewise aims to counter the stresses and strains that can be created at work. Intentional team spaces for open, honest dialogue, mutual accountability and surfacing

and naming issues as they arise are supported and embedded in the culture. Conflict is normalised and seen as having transformative creative potential, as an opportunity to learn and deepen relationships. Viewing mistakes and failure as an inevitable part of being human supports a culture where mistakes aren't punished, but learning and experimenting together are valued.

Taking stock and looking ahead – pathways to more good practice

We want to further codify and document how we view conflict and the tools and processes we have to working with it as it arises. Importantly we want to focus on what happens after conflict has arisen, how feelings are processed (particularly shame), and sense of belonging restored.

We want to hold a deeper enquiry into how power and hierarchy work across the organisation. How do they influence decision making? How can we make sure the use of power is as explicit as possible, and as useful as possible? How is responsibility held while power is shared?

We want to create more spaces where trustees and staff come together as a whole to collectively tune into and shape purpose and strategic direction.