

Introduction

Welcome to our Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Policy covering all of our offices.

Our policy sets out some examples of how we, as a firm, act responsibly on both a corporate and an individual level. It also sets out our CSR policy in relation to the 4 key responsibility areas that we have identified:

- + Our people and our workplace
- + Our clients and our suppliers
- + Our local communities
- + Our local and global environment

Our people and our workplace

Equality and diversity

Our people are our most valuable assets and they are critical in enabling us to provide exceptional service to our clients. We want to attract, retain and develop people of the highest calibre. To achieve this we endeavour to recruit and promote our people exclusively on their abilities, thereby promoting equal opportunities and avoiding all forms of discrimination.

Training and development

We fully recognise the need to continually develop and stretch our people and we commit to investing in the legal and professional skills of our people. We provide all of our people with access to internal and external training and development opportunities. Most of our learning occurs on the job and therefore regular upward and downward feedback is encouraged at all levels.

Each of our departments provides internal technical legal training, as well as know how such as standard documents and precedents, so as to ensure that we can work in as effective and efficient a way as is possible.

Every one of our people has a Personal Development Review at least twice per calendar year.

Nurturing new talent

We are happy to accept applications for work experience with us and for prospective trainee solicitors to apply for a training contract. However we have limited availability for work experience and only recruit trainees when we have identified a business need to do so. All vacancies are advertised on our website. Where we have vacancies we carefully read and consider all CVs sent to us. We are working towards offering a structured placement for successful work experience applicants, so as to provide them with valuable experience of a solicitor's work and working environment. We are working towards accreditation by the Work Experience Association.

Mentoring

We will take on trainees across our offices and provide them with a varied training contract as and when we have identified a business need so to do. In January 2017, the Firm introduced a formal mentoring programme which was developed as part of the Associates' Academy. It is open to all staff to apply to become part of the programme at any time.

Work/life balance

We fully recognise the benefit of a sensible work/life balance for all of our people. Our fee earners all have sensible target hours, and everyone is actively encouraged to use their full holiday allowances each year. All of our people receive extra days' holiday over the Christmas period when the office is closed on top of their usual entitlement.

We understand the importance of our people getting to know each other outside of the office setting. We organise regular social activities on a departmental and a firm-wide level and we

encourage our people to participate. We encourage training “away days” which are proving very enlightening and successful in meeting training needs and building strong teams.

Benefits

We offer an excellent benefits package including competitive salaries, and pension. We do our best to be as flexible as possible towards individuals’ needs as long as this is consistent with our business needs. We are working towards accreditation by the National Living Wage Foundation.

Health and safety

We are committed to maintaining the highest standards of health and safety in all of our offices. We have a formal health and safety manual, which underlines our commitment to maintaining a safe and healthy working environment. All incidents and accidents are reported to the HR and Facilities Manager, who ensure that they are investigated and that any necessary steps are taken to prevent recurrence.

Lexcel

In order to ensure that we deliver all our clients a high quality service and sound legal advice, we have invested in systems and procedures throughout the entire firm to ensure all matters are handled efficiently. We have developed our management and reporting structures to ensure that we continually focus on the delivery of service excellence and constantly look at ways of improving the way we work.

We currently hold the Lexcel Quality Mark accreditation by the Law Society in all of our offices. To achieve this status we have to undergo stringent independent assessments on an annual basis to certify that Lexcel standards are met.

Publicly funded and pro-bono

As a firm we are committed to undertaking publicly funded work and we also carry out occasional work on a pro-bono basis for deserving clients (at the discretion of the Partners).

Our clients and our suppliers

Equality and diversity

We act for a wide variety of clients and we commit to trying to accommodate any specific client needs that may arise from sex, gender, disability, race, religion, beliefs, age or sexual orientation. We will not refuse to act for a client, nor to contract with a supplier, on such discriminatory grounds.

Every member of the firm is expected to comply with this policy and any allegations of discrimination will be taken very seriously. Any client or supplier who has any queries about this should contact the Managing Partner, Bill Willcocks.

Client care

We believe in establishing a personal relationship with all our clients to fully understand the exact details of their particular situation, their individual needs and personal preferences. This understanding, combined with our reputation for discretion, sensitivity and pragmatism has engendered an environment where we build long term relationships with our clients.

In order to ensure that we deliver all our clients the service they expect we work to The Law Society Practice Management Standards and we shall:

- + Highlight all the legal options available to our clients and recommend the most appropriate given their circumstances
- + Return our clients’ telephone calls as soon as we can - on the same day if possible
- + Deal with urgent correspondence as a priority and we try to deal with all other correspondence within 48 hours
- + Arrange suitable appointments with the minimum of delay

- + Advise our clients of all costs prior to any expenditure

Supply chain management

We are committed to working towards ensuring that our current and potential suppliers focus on environmental impact, sustainability, fair-trade and labour laws, where possible. We shall work towards actively engaging with suppliers and potential suppliers on these issues as part of the procurement process.

Our local communities

Engagement

We are committed to engaging with the communities in which we work and we understand our responsibility to those communities. We encourage our people to become involved in community projects and we encourage those with legal or other skills to use those skills for the benefit of our local communities. We all benefit from community involvement, not only the community itself, but also ourselves as a firm and also our people as individuals.

The Firm is excited about the partnership being forged with Bristol Dementia Action Alliance and BRACE. With the support of the Firm and Partners, over 100 members of staff have volunteered to become Dementia Friends. The training provided by Anna Molter continues to raise awareness in the Firm of the particular needs of people with dementia. The Firm is supporting Anna in her new role as a Trustee of BDAA and in her plans to rollout further awareness training sessions to other organisations in the Bristol legal community.

Pro-bono activities

Those of our people with legal skills and other skills are encouraged to use those skills pro bono. Our lawyers undertake pro-bono legal work at the firm's discretion. Every appraisal will include discussion of that person's voluntary commitment and how the firm can support that personal commitment.

Charities

The firm has adopted a policy of having a named charity of the year and has in place clear criteria to ensure democracy in this process.

Local and global environment

Climate change

We are committed to reducing our carbon footprint, but we recognise that our different offices will need to address this in different ways. We are considering commissioning for an environmental baseline review of our offices to be carried out, the findings and recommendations of which we can use to set ourselves challenging, quantifiable environmental targets.

IT/systems

We are committed to investing significant sums of money in our IT systems as these can, when carefully managed, reduce our environmental impact. We are currently considering investing in a teleconferencing system linking all our offices which where possible can be used for internal meetings so as to reduce physical travel between offices.

Additionally, we have a .net case management system which operates across the entire firm. This reduces our paper usage and file storage requirements. We are currently actively encouraging the use of email rather than postal service to assist in this area also. We will increasingly move as a matter of policy to using less paper in our case work.

Environmental management system

We already recycle our waste paper, but we are committed to reducing the amount of wastage. We shall continue encouraging our people to print double sided documents where practical and to adopt any other practices that will reduce waste.

Cycling to work

We encourage staff to cycle to work where possible and provide secure cycle storage and showers at some of our offices. The many benefits of offering this scheme to our employees are;

- Fitter, healthier and more productive staff;
- Reduces the carbon footprint;
- Reduces travelling/commuting costs.
- Bike to Work Scheme

Law and ethics

We are a law firm and as such are subject to rigorous regulation by the Solicitors Regulation Authority ("SRA"). Our Managing Partner and Compliance Manager are responsible for monitoring the risks that we face.

We are committed to following a risk based approach to preventing money laundering and we operate a rigorous client identification and verification procedure in line with legislation.

Online training modules covering Anti-Money Laundering, Conflicts, Health & Safety, Anti Bribery, Data Protection, Cyber Security and Equality & Diversity are compulsory for all our people. We have a complaints procedure which complies with the requirements established by the SRA. Complaints will be fully investigated in a fair and expedient manner.

As lawyers, and particularly as a firm with a long-standing local (and for some sectors of work regional/national) reputation we understand the need to live and operate not only within the bounds of the law, but also in accordance with strong morals and values.

Responsibilities

The COLP has overall responsibility for this policy.

Review

In order to ensure that it remains fit for purpose this policy will be formally reviewed annually by the COLP.