



# The Jackson Canter Group

## UN Global Compact Communication of Progress 2016

THE JACKSON CANTER GROUP



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# Statement from our CEO

The Jackson Canter Group is one of the fastest growing law firms in the North West of England. We have grown into a business that employs over 250 staff, but we have retained our family feel and radical outlook. We also remain committed to our proud tradition of furthering civil liberties and human rights.

The Jackson Canter Group's mission is to 'make a difference through the practice of law'. This ethos informs our continuing commitment to the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC). Striving towards the implementation of the 10 UNGC principles is not only integral to fulfilling our responsibilities to our people and communities, it is imperative to achieving our corporate mission.

2016 has been a year of great transition for our business and as we have doubled in size, we have also doubled our efforts to become the most ethical business we can be. People are at the centre of our business and we have focused on the labour and human rights strands under the UNGC.

Rather than taking a 'compliance' or 'risk management' approach, we have taken a 'best practice' approach to business ethics. For example, we have become the second law firm in the North West to join the Living Wage Foundation. We have also focused on ensuring that our employees have a voice. Around 25% of our employees are involved in steering committees which have played a pivotal role in shaping our business, among them a 'staff representation' and 'ethics' committee.

Striving to achieve the UNGC principles involves making a difference to the community around us. For this reason, we set up the Jackson Canter Foundation, which receives 2% of our profit as well as funding from our fundraising activities. We have also established a pro-bono policy, which allocates business time to supporting the third sector. Beyond this, we have engaged in advocacy to defend human rights and access to justice in a climate of increasing antipathy towards both.

This approach has helped us to become a better employer and a more ethical business. It has also helped us to compete with much larger firms. As a result of our hard work in the community, we recently won the Excellence in Pro-Bono Award from the UK Law Society. One of our directors, Chris Topping, was also awarded Human Rights Lawyer of the Year.

Looking forward, we are determined that our approach to growth will remain rights-focused, sustainable and responsible. As we grow, we will need to develop our policies and processes to ensure that our ethical outlook remains at the centre of everything we do.

A priority for us in the coming year is developing measured outcomes that we can build on every year. Prior to the year end, we will be undertaking an internal ethics audit. This has been designed around the United Nations Guiding Principles and will gather data from all of our employees, allowing us to compare and contrast our progress year on year.

We look forward to developing our implementation of, and reporting on, the UNGC principles for many years to come.

*Brian Cullen*

# Progress update: policies

Over the past year, we have engaged in a review and overhaul of all of our staff policies with regard to **human rights**. This has enabled us to ensure that our policy framework better protects and promotes the rights of our staff. Of particular relevance have been the updates to our equality, harassment and stress at work policies. Bringing together human rights issues into a clear and implementable 'dignity at work' policy has been a particular success in this regard.

We have also developed our policies to support employees outside the workplace. We enable employees to fully realise their right to health and wellbeing through our membership of an extensive employee support scheme. Our ongoing policy review relates to flexible working and mental health.

Our ethical purchasing policy is currently in development and will ensure that we do all we can to ensure that we do not source from suppliers who are not willing to work towards respecting, promoting and protecting all human rights.

At the centre of our policy commitment to human rights is our commitment to legal aid work. We believe that access to justice is necessary for all of us to be able to enjoy human rights. It is for this reason that we have pledged to be 'the last firm standing' in the legal aid field. We continue to do our best to achieve a viable business model that allows us to maintain our policy commitment to serving disadvantaged clients in a climate of diminishing legal aid.

We have reviewed and updated our **anti-bribery and corruption** policy. We have stringent practice regulations within our industry that deal with bribery and corruption and we constantly maintain up to date and clear policy guidelines for our staff.

As part of our commitment to **the environment**, it is our policy to work towards becoming a paperless office. This is very difficult within the legal profession, however, we are still committed to achieving this goal as far as possible.

# Progress update: processes

In 2016 we have focused on developing processes within our business that **empower employees** to have a voice regarding the way we run our business. We set up a staff representation committee which takes staff concerns on an anonymous basis to our management. We have also set up anonymous comment boxes in each of our offices and any concerns left in these boxes are dealt with at a meeting between senior management and the staff representation committee on a bi-monthly basis. The minutes of each of these meetings are circulated to all staff.

We also set up a variety of steering committees which submit ideas from the staff for board consideration. These committees cover all areas of our business and have already made a significant impact on employees' experiences within our firm. For example, the living wage policy, wellbeing initiative and an employee reward and recognition scheme, all started at committee level and successfully obtained board approval. We also have an 'ethics' committee, which focuses on discussing how we can do better as an ethical business. This committee fed into our internal auditing framework and are in the process of developing an ethical purchasing policy.

Any of our staff can join these committees, and their membership is varied across all levels, offices and departments. At the moment, around 25% of our staff are involved in our steering committees and have an input into the way we run our business.

Beyond this, we have also established an 'open forum' mechanism. This is a quarterly mechanism by which all of our employees are invited to an open meeting with our CEO. They receive a full update on our business and our plans for the future and are able to ask questions on any topic.

We have strengthened our **anti-corruption** processes this year through the creation of a new position of 'compliance manager'. Our compliance manager also sits as chair of the Law Society's Money Laundering Task Force and acts as our money laundering reporting officer. She has strengthened our processes in relation to identifying and dealing with corruption, bribery and money-laundering. This has involved the design of a new training program for most of our staff covering this issue.

We have strengthened our processes more generally through the creation of a 'training academy'. The academy covers **human rights** issues such as equality and diversity, through bespoke training for all staff. It also seeks to empower staff to be able to enjoy their rights as individuals, through covering mental health and workplace stress.

# Progress update: practice

This year we have intensified our efforts to reach out to disadvantaged people within our community and ensure that they can access **legal support**. To this end, we have conducted free legal advice clinics in areas of our community where there is poorest access to legal assistance.

A key success for us has been establishing the 'Jackson Canter Foundation.' The Foundation aims to support disadvantaged groups within our community, under three main pillars of intervention: legal, social and education. 2% of our profits go to the Foundation, alongside other money raised by our staff through fundraising initiatives. Alongside financial support, we offer free legal support through third sector organisations through our pro-bono scheme.

Another part of engaging with our community on **human rights and labour issues** involves using our voice as a business to advocate for those who do not have a voice in our society. In a climate of increasing antipathy towards human rights and legal access, we have been vocal in advocating for these issues. We supported Amnesty International's campaign to save the Human Rights Acts across a range of different media. We have also supported groups such as 'Young Legal Aid Lawyers' as well as adding our voice to theirs in the campaign for access to justice for the disadvantaged in our society. We have also been very active in advocating for the 'Hillsborough Law'. The law is aimed at strengthening public transparency and citizens' rights to information about the actions of public institutions and officials.

We have also been vocal in our advocacy in relation to business ethics. Through hosting public talks and seminars, as well as writing articles, we have played an active role in educating small businesses and others about the role that human rights and ethics should play in business practice.

This year, we moved to new offices, and commissioned a **sustainability** report into how environmentally friendly the premises are. As a result of the report, we have made several changes, for example, our light system is now on a motion-sensor and timer system instead of a switch system. We are currently in the process of expanding and refurbishing office space and have sought information regarding environmental and sustainability concerns. We will factor this issue into our decision making.

Within our business, we have focused on a well rounded conception of employee well being as central to the enjoyment of **human rights**. In this regard, we have conducted a wellbeing initiative. This involved offering activities such as yoga and mindfulness to our staff as well as rolling out an employee healthcare scheme for all of our staff.

We have had a successful year in terms of promoting **labour rights** within our business. The introduction of the living wage across our firm is something that we are proud of. We have also engaged with suppliers about their own practices regarding the living wage, and as a result of this, one supplier agreed to phase in a living wage policy over the next couple of years. We do not employ unpaid interns. We instead choose to give our people similar opportunities through using a paid and structured apprenticeship scheme.

The Jackson Canter Group is a trading name of Jackson Canter Ltd (07889828) a solicitors practice authorised and regulated by the Solicitors Regulation Authority No 567726.

A list of Members and Directors is open to inspection at the Registered Offices of the Company situated at 3rd Floor, Walker House, Exchange Flags, Liverpool L2 3YL.

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