



A global law firm's perspective on responsible business

Freshfields' UN Global Compact 2018 report



Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer

Responsible | *business*



As a global law firm, we believe we have a shared responsibility to support a sustainable future for all. We can contribute in a number of ways – we can improve the way we do things ourselves, by promoting integrity and ethics, and by being a diverse employer that manages its environmental footprint. We can have a positive impact in society by encouraging community investment and doing pro bono work. But we are also the oil that keeps the world's economies going: the rule of law, clear ownership of assets, supporting our clients' transition to a sustainable future thus enabling business to be successful are all part of the ways in which we can contribute to the sustainability of the world.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Edward Braham". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Edward Braham

Senior Partner

Responsible | business

Freshfields is one of a handful of leading global law firms. We help our clients grow, strengthening and defending their businesses around the world by managing their most complex transactions, risks and regulatory challenges.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of our membership of the UN Global Compact (UNGC). We were the first international law firm to sign up, and did so because we also believe in helping companies *'align their strategies and operations with universal principles on human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption – and take action to advance societal goals'*.

I firmly believe that our privileged position as a trusted adviser to many of the world's most dynamic companies brings with it responsibilities to society. I also know that to be successful in the long term we need to approach our commitment to being a responsible business with the same creativity and focus that we bring to our clients' most critical issues.

Business will shape the future, but this will only be for good if companies take a long-term perspective. I believe change can be achieved if we can bring together corporations, governments and civil society. For our clients and our firm to thrive, we need the rule of law and healthy, growing and stable economies that value and respect nature and the resources it provides. In other words, sustainable economies.

This report – beyond providing an update on our performance against the UNGC's 10 principles – gives some insight into the challenges we face. It also explains how we approach the three strands of our responsible business strategy: how we run our business; how we have a positive impact on

society; and how we engage with our clients on their own sustainability goals.

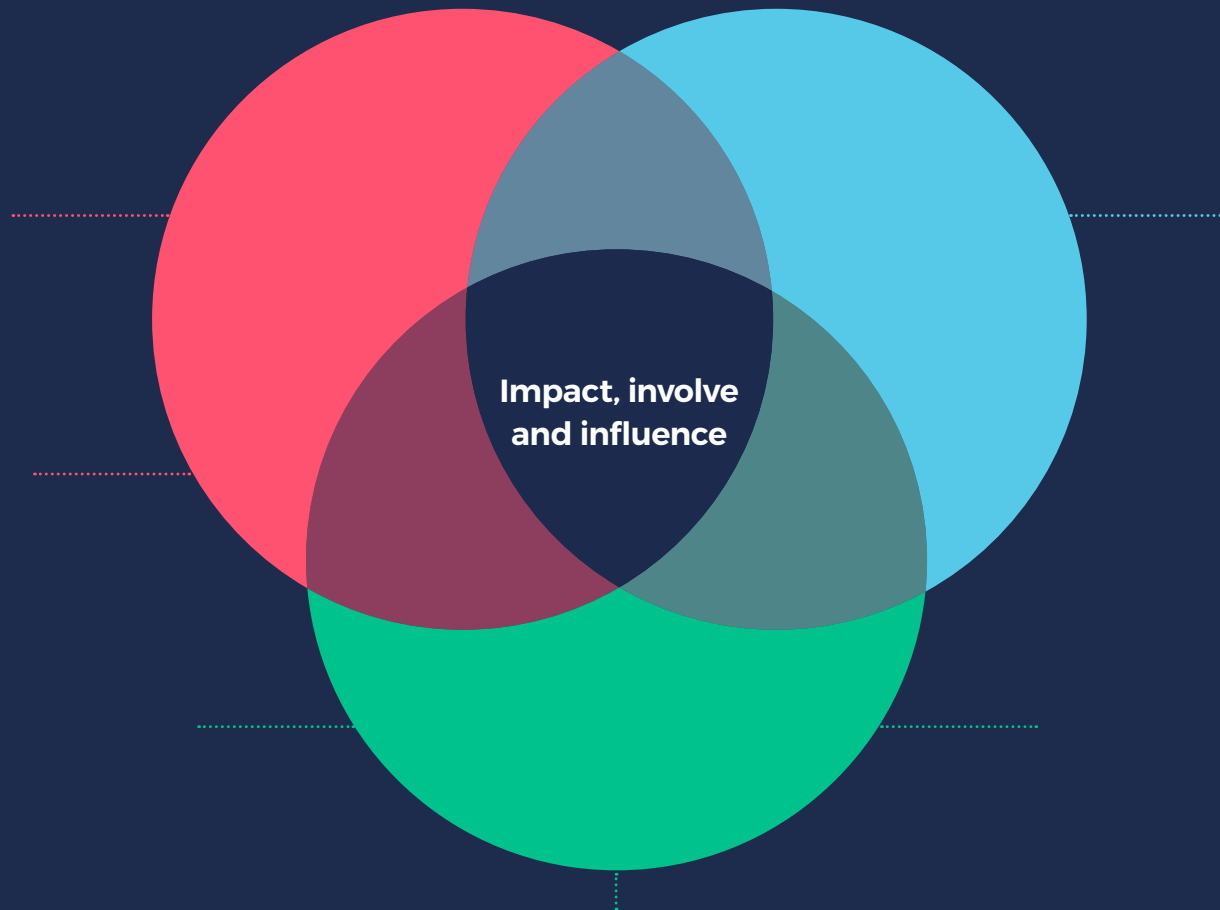
I hope you find the articles which follow thought-provoking and that they demonstrate our approach to meeting our commitment to the UNGC.



Edward Braham

Senior Partner

Our strategic approach



United Nations Global Compact

The UNGC is a voluntary initiative based on CEO commitments to implement universal sustainability principles and taking steps to support UN goals. It is supported by a framework for businesses, stating 10 principles in the areas of human rights, labour, the environment and anti-corruption:

1

Businesses should support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights.

2

Businesses should make sure that they are not complicit in human rights abuses.

3

Businesses should uphold the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining.

4

Businesses should uphold the elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour.

5

Businesses should uphold the effective abolition of child labour.

6

Businesses should uphold the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

7

Businesses should support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges.

8

Businesses should undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility.

9

Businesses should encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies.

10

Businesses should work against corruption in all its forms, including extortion and bribery.

THE 10 PRINCIPLES OF THE UNITED NATIONS GLOBAL COMPACT

Responsible working

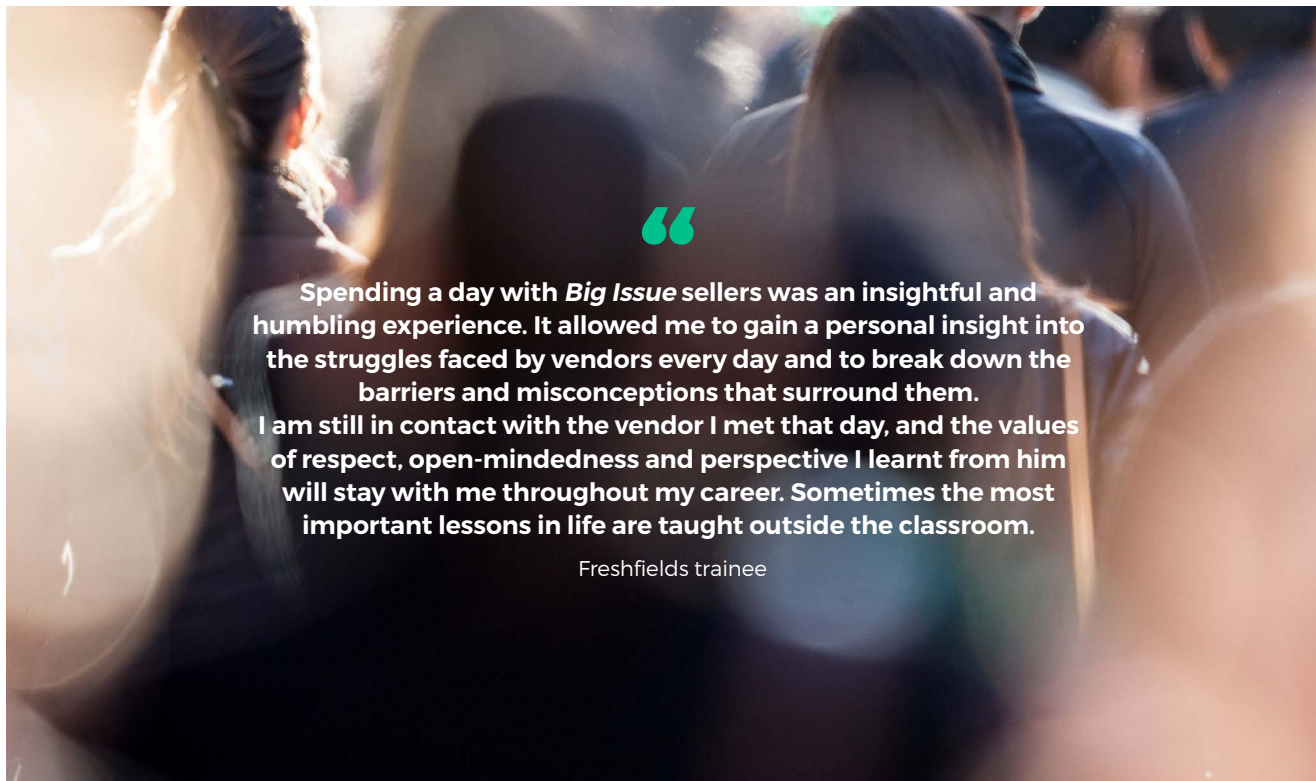
Being a responsible business is fundamental to who we are as an organisation. It's about our people and processes aligning in a way that promotes responsible working practices, responsible procurement practices and a responsible attitude to our impact on the environment. It is the way we live out our commitment to the principles of the UNGC.

United Nations Global Compact principles

- 1
- 2
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- 10

How corporate community investment can create an ecosystem where all can thrive

Corporate community investment is one of the pillars of responsible business. Activities such as mentoring, hosting work placements and sharing knowledge in areas of professional expertise enable us to offer opportunities to our target groups and complement the financial contributions we make to our community partners' work or through matched giving. But the benefits of such programmes don't just go one way. For businesses looking to address their challenges around diversity, inclusion and talent retention, the community investment programme is a good place to start.



Responsible businesses typically have more engaged staff who feel greater pride and trust in their employer. Further, input from younger generations has also accelerated the impact of community investment, as they are likely to make a stronger connection between their employment and their personal values, participate readily, and can articulate responsible practices inside and out.

Community investment activities offer volunteers personal and professional development opportunities outside of traditional training programmes. Activities such as work experience hosting or mentoring offer the chance to develop communication skills, as well as providing experience of management and delegation. These opportunities also play a role in broadening horizons. For example, in London our Big Issue Foundation 'vendor days' allow our trainees to spend an afternoon alongside Big Issue sellers, all of whom have experienced significant financial and social exclusion.

This article continues on the next page

How corporate community investment can create an ecosystem where all can thrive



I look forward to these sessions with students because they present a valuable opportunity for us to connect with the local community here in Singapore. In presenting the sessions on appropriate conduct in the workplace, my colleagues and I find ourselves reflecting on our own actions, and the training helped to reinforce our own ethical behaviour.

Freshfields associate


With the support of the charity, vendors sell the magazine so they can earn a meaningful income. Our trainees experience an environment that they aren't used to, are challenged to confront their preconceptions, and see first-hand some of the barriers the vendors face.

Recent feedback from our Singapore office showed that community-based workshops not only provided opportunities to share professional knowledge, skills and behaviours, but also prompted employees' self-reflection.

Connections between colleagues, and often with clients, are strengthened through collaborative community work. In Germany, we recently joined forces with Deutsche Bank to launch an online mentoring programme with our existing partner Volunteer Vision. Together, we are offering 1:1 online language training to 100 employees across Germany with a refugee background, who are working in small and medium-sized companies that have little or no resources to provide such job-tailored language training. This joint project is a result of our previous, ongoing global engagement with Volunteer Vision where so far 50 Freshfields employees from over 10 different countries have supported refugees as online mentors.

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How corporate community investment can create an ecosystem where all can thrive

By bringing together staff and students from less privileged or 'non-traditional' backgrounds, our community investment programmes can also impact how diversity is viewed and valued internally, thus helping us to make the culture shift necessary to become a truly inclusive environment. By working closely with talented students such as the [Freshfields Stephen Lawrence scholars](#) , the value and richness of a diverse culture is clear to all involved – a fact acknowledged by the hundreds of volunteers, from all levels of seniority, who take part in the scheme every year. The scale of this volunteering commitment and the frequency of the activities ensure that these issues and culture change are front and centre, as well as encouraging an internal ecosystem which genuinely supports individual growth and open dialogue.

'It's important to me to support social mobility programmes, and as a big graduate employer, I feel Freshfields has a responsibility to do this. It can also help to challenge any perceptions held by staff who take part and support.'

Freshfields employee

In 2019, we must build on our progress to date and continue to refine our community investment strategy to best reflect our business, our people and the nuances of our global footprint. We'll also continue to explore ways to further embed a 'give back, do good' ethic into our workplace culture and review how we support employees in their efforts. Community investment is just one piece of the responsible business puzzle, but it's one that we need to get right if we are to create an ecosystem where all can thrive and business can be sustainable for the long term.

Community investment in 2017-18

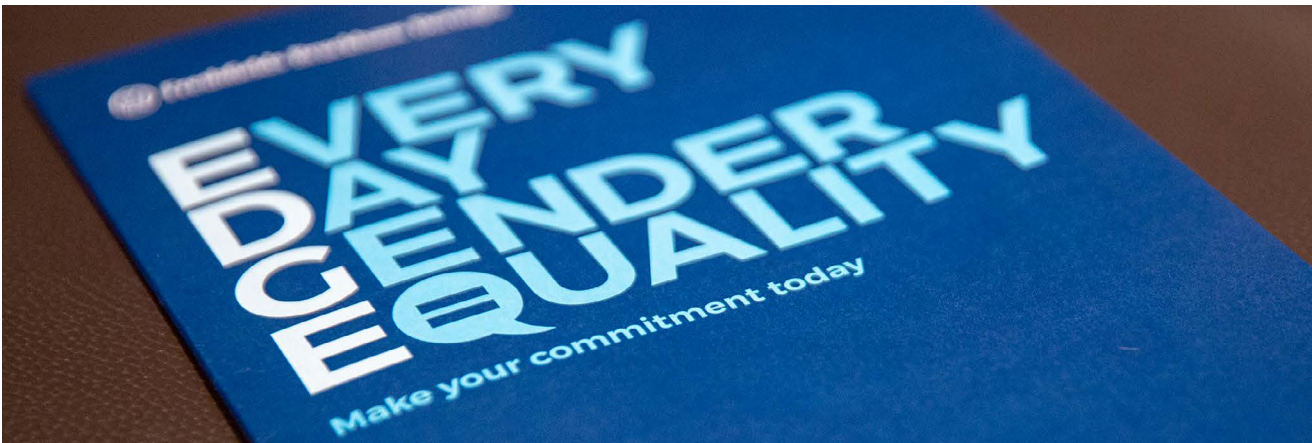
Over
11,500

hours of non-legal
time on **community
investment
activities**

Over
8,000

beneficiaries of
**community
investment
activity**

Our business and our people



Diversity and inclusion

We globally launched our [Every Day Gender Equality \(EDGE\) Commitment](#) in November 2018, giving all staff an opportunity to sign up to promote gender equality in the workplace and the elimination of discrimination.

To mark International Women's Day and our 275th anniversary, 27 women across five regions shared their thoughts on the theme #pressforprogress.

Our inclusive leadership programme has now been attended by over 250 leaders across the firm.

Asia Managing Partner Georgia Dawson was named as one of the 2018 FT OUTstanding LGBT Executive Allies.

We launched our global reverse mentoring pilot in November 2018, connecting junior professionals with senior colleagues, offering opportunities for their voices to be heard, sharing new ideas and building relationships with the firm's leadership.

We reaffirmed our commitment to diversity and human rights by adopting the UN Business Standards for LGBTI people.



Minimum wage

We became accredited by the Living Wage Foundation in November 2018, publicly committing us and our suppliers to pay a real living wage in the UK.


We continue to pay the Minimum Wage Law (MiLoG) wage in our Germany offices.

Helping staff make a difference

We're redesigning our policies around matched giving and disaster response, to better engage our staff in how they can make a difference in their local communities and in global disasters.

Our business and our people

Procurement and human rights

Our [responsible procurement guidelines](#)  were updated in February 2018, reinforcing our commitment to ensuring the highest standards of behaviour in our suppliers, in particular with regard to labour and other forms of human rights.

There are six business functions represented on our multidisciplinary **Modern Slavery Working Group**, alongside two external members.

Human rights are considered in our client and mandate on-boarding procedure. In 2018, 25 potential mandates were escalated through that process to a team of senior human rights lawyers for detailed analysis against the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.



Mental health in the workplace

According to the World Health Organization, 676 million people worldwide experience some form of mental health issue.

In the UK, one in four people is affected every year. The human and financial impact of mental health is vast, yet until recently it has been a taboo subject – surrounded by stigma and a lack of knowledge, understanding and service provision.

It has been, and remains, a serious potential cause of discrimination in the workplace. Only in the last decade have societies, governments and organisations opened up the conversation.



So what role can organisations play in dealing with mental health, and are they part of the problem or the solution? The answer is not straightforward or limited to particular industries, jobs or organisations. The behaviour of colleagues, flexibility and autonomy are often as important as pressure, hours and pay.

Organisations increasingly recognise their responsibilities and appreciate that there are better ways to drive change than the traditional reactive benefits-support model. How, exactly, is a different matter. Evidence suggests multilevel interventions are needed to address the challenges around prevention, openness, support and resources.

Here at Freshfields, like other organisations, we are on a journey. Our senior leaders are talking more openly about mental wellbeing via a series of videos and panel discussions, and are supporting wellbeing events and activities. We also run specific mental health training sessions to help our people spot the signs of mental ill health in themselves and others,

but this is just a start. We have begun to weave mental health and wellbeing into our manager and leadership development programmes, and have introduced measures to foster a more open feedback culture and supportive and inclusive behaviours. We recognise that change takes time and effort, and that results are hard to measure.

Alongside this we have launched a global programme to embed the concept of ‘mental health first aid’ across our organisation. After a pilot phase last September, we have committed to train 1 in 25 of our people by World Mental Health Day this year. The impact goes far beyond Freshfields – each of our first-aiders can support those with mental ill health in their communities, their families and among their friends and neighbours.

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Mental health in the workplace

While mental ill health is more prevalent in some parts of the world, it is a global problem. Fortunately, the realisation that we need to protect and enhance mental wellbeing as we do our physical health is also global. Some examples of this in action include the City Mental Health Alliance, which was recently established in Hong Kong, and Community Business, which drives the agenda in countries where people find it hard to discuss their challenges with even their close family. This is where business can make a difference.

There is a lot to be done, and a lot more than has been touched on here. But the more businesses recognise they have a role to play in prevention and recovery – and the more this is translated into action – the more quickly society and business alike will benefit.



14 videos from partners discussing their own experience of mental wellbeing were shared across the firm.



events across the global network were held on World Mental Health Day 2018.



staff are trained in mental health first aid skills as part of our global support team.



Our target is to train 1 in 25 of our people by World Mental Health Day in October 2019.

Managing our environmental impact

As an international law firm, we have an operational environmental impact driven predominantly by the footprint of our offices and travel requirements. Though our footprint is not as large as businesses in other sectors, we take the responsibility to minimise it seriously, in line with our Responsible Business Strategy, and have set global targets to be achieved by 2020.

-10%

Energy reduction

Reduce emissions from office energy use by 10% (against 2015/2016)

16.5% reduction

-30%

Paper use

Reduce our paper use by 30% (against 2015/2016)

13.4% reduction

-10%

Travel reduction

Reduce emissions from travel by 10% (against 2015/2016)

18.3% increase



Plastics

Phase out single-use plastics

In progress

Managing our
environmental impact



Our London office was recertified as **ISO 14001** and **ISO 50001** compliant in October 2018

We have been **carbon neutral** since 2007

In response to the climate challenge, we have gone beyond 'business as usual', using carbon finance projects to drive more substantial change. In 2015, Freshfields partnered with the East African social enterprise TIST to create the award-winning Freshfields Reforestation in East Africa Programme (REAP). The programme will, over a 10-year period, plant two million trees, sequester over 220,000 tCO₂e, improve the livelihoods of almost 9,000 new smallholder farmers, creating additional sources of income beyond subsistence farming.

The programme delivers many wider benefits aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals through training and education, including poverty reduction, improved nutrition, health and hygiene, and increased gender equality through leadership opportunities for women. It is this innovative approach with a broad range of positive impacts that attracted us to REAP: it is not 'just' a carbon offsetting scheme, but a carbon offsetting scheme that delivers opportunities for East African farmers to improve their lives and the wellbeing of their communities.

A positive impact on society

We aim to be valued by the communities around us. This means focusing our efforts on areas that align with our skills and experience – promoting access to justice and access to opportunity – and targeting specific groups who most need this type of support.

Through global initiatives with local impacts, our pro bono and community investment activity is built around supporting minorities, refugees, women, children, people identifying as LGBT+, and the underprivileged and under-represented.

United Nations Global Compact principles

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What does ‘access to justice’ really mean?

The rule of law – with ‘access to justice’ one of its key components – is essential for business to thrive. Naturally it underpins our work as a law firm, and is also a necessary foundation of many of the UNGC principles. Human rights and labour rights cannot effectively be protected – nor corruption fought – without it.



Our pro bono practice has always promoted access to justice. We focus our effort on our target groups, but what does ‘access to justice’ really mean?

For many people, the term is shorthand for access to the courts (that is, about access to judges) or legal representation (access to publicly funded lawyers, especially to represent litigants in court). For us, access to justice means something more basic: ensuring people have effective access to their legal rights. Without this access, the ‘law of the land’ risks becoming a meaningless concept, which is why ensuring access to justice is a key responsibility of democratic government.

Governments and legislators can, and do, affect access to the legal rights they create in a variety of ways. However, there is a long way to go if we are to achieve this goal, and policy in these areas is not always co-ordinated. To be as impactful as possible, a joined-up strategy needs to draw together things such as court reform (to make it simpler to access courts) and legal aid policy (to ensure people have access to lawyers where necessary to access their rights).

It should also co-ordinate with the wider advice sector, which often complements legal aid provision, supported in many jurisdictions by a mixture of government grants and charitable fundraising.

Relevant, too, is law reform (to simplify laws themselves) and public legal education (to raise awareness of laws and how to access them). The use of technology is an issue of increasing importance, as governments digitise administrative decision-making and court procedures and look to innovate the ways in which publicly funded legal assistance is delivered. Where governments approach the challenge of ensuring effective access to legal rights in this holistic way there are significant synergies.

We aim to ensure that our pro bono practice plays its part in promoting this joined-up and holistic approach to access to justice, to make as big an impact as possible.

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What does ‘access to justice’ really mean?

We use direct legal work for individuals (the backbone of our practice in many jurisdictions) to build strong relationships within the sector and with governments, NGOs and the wider advice sector. We aim to harness this to inform policy work where the reform of law and procedure ultimately serves to make laws and their enforcement for our target groups more accessible. We use the evidence gained through our direct legal work for individuals about gaps or challenges in the publicly funded legal aid system to argue for reform and bring or support strategic cases that can clarify or improve the system. We also aim to promote public legal education, support and work collaboratively with the advice sector, and do as much as we can to harness the potential of legal technology.

If we can do all of these things, we can have the greatest impact on access to justice, and in doing so support the UNGC principles.

In the US, we won the Abolitionist Award from the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women for our work on anti-trafficking, and the 2018 Above and Beyond award for work on behalf of gender-based violence survivors, from Sanctuary for Families.

The Legal Aid Society of New York also awarded Freshfields a Pro Bono Publico Award for the fifth year in a row.

Shelter

In the UK, we were awarded pro bono initiative of the year at *The Lawyer* Awards 2018 for 10 years of working with Shelter (UK).

In Tokyo, we received the FTI Pro Bono Law Firm of the Year award for our contribution to the Lawyers for LGBT and Allies Network, of which Freshfields is a founding member.



Our work in pro bono

CASE STUDY

In the US, we filed a class action on behalf of Afghan and Iraqi citizens whose visa applications have been unreasonably delayed. Our clients have all supported US troops and development efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq, and as a result live in mortal danger of attacks from members of the Taliban, ISIS and other militias. Their visa applications are supposed to be dealt with within nine months; however, all of our clients – and the hundreds, if not thousands, of other class members – have been forced to wait years for the government to decide their applications.

CASE STUDY

The award-winning CourtNav platform, which we created with our UK pro bono client RCJ Advice, was recently awarded significant funding to expand the service to help domestic violence victims seeking non-molestation orders.

'I was brought into this country as a domestic servant. I did not have any family and no friends to start with... Daily I was beaten, called names... I had no one to turn to so, no one to speak to – how could I come out of this situation?... [Freshfields] supported me all the way through and I ended up getting justice.'

Patience Asuquo, human trafficking survivor and Freshfields pro bono client

CASE STUDY

In the UK, we run an 'exceptional case funding' project with Islington Law Centre, which used evidence from our project in a recent case that restored legal aid for unaccompanied migrant children seeking immigration advice.

CASE STUDY

We provided Fair Trials with research covering 90 jurisdictions that supported their report and ongoing work to ensure safeguards in the use of plea bargains are built into fair trial protections. We then acted for Fair Trials filing an amicus brief in the US in a test case.

CASE STUDY

A cross-border team, led out of Germany, has continued its research on LGBT+ rights, now in almost 30 jurisdictions, to inform Stonewall's Global Workplace Briefings.

Access to Justice



'There's some legal work that people just can't pay for... if no one's going to do it on a pro bono basis then it won't happen... Sometimes actually that means the whole legal system and society is impoverished because there's a piece of justice that just doesn't happen.'

Kevin Whibley, Senior Associate, Freshfields

How do you solve a problem like social mobility?

Social mobility is a national conversation in the UK. For some groups, their background and lack of connections mean that the odds are heavily stacked against them. Despite their talents, they are held back from achieving and contributing to society as they should.



At the same time, businesses are faced with similar challenges. How do they ensure their sector more closely matches national demographics? How do they become more representative of those they serve? How do they achieve the equality in employment and economic inclusion that are at the heart of many international goals?

This issue has been particularly noticeable in the law. And where there are few role models for those outside the profession's traditional educational, social and ethnic groups, individuals can quickly dismiss a legal career as something that is 'not for me'.

We have been considering these difficult questions for many years. How do you solve a problem like social mobility? How can business make a real impact? And what will make a difference in the most challenged groups, for instance where social mobility and ethnicity intersect?

Our experience has shown that the easy solutions will not move the dial, and that deeper thought is required to break the problems down and find a more effective approach.

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How do you solve a problem like social mobility?

For example, we remain convinced that giving money via traditional scholarships doesn't on its own improve social mobility. Our results show that individuals must be at the core of any efforts to challenge the status quo. We have achieved greater impact from co-creating programmes with participants – problems such as these demand bespoke conversations and high-quality, tailored content. Target groups should determine the timing of meetings and work experiences on offer within the context of the financial and other pressures they face. Mentoring may be as much about coaching individuals through significant life issues as it is about career development, but pastoral conversations only happen where there is trust.

In addition, thinking about the challenge solely through the lens of those you are trying to help risks tackling only half the problem. To bridge the gap with those who lack opportunity, business also needs to change.

For example, under most circumstances a premium brand is of huge value to an organisation. But for those from non-traditional backgrounds, an invitation to experience life at a top City institution can feel like a journey to another planet. A solution must be found to engage with those who 'self-select away'.



Businesses need to focus on their culture and the 'antibodies' that can reject those from diverse backgrounds. And they cannot make inclusion mainstream and open minds if they outsource such activities to others.

If, as in the UK, potential does not always translate into top academic results, a re-examination of how merit might be evidenced, and innovative ways to identify those with potential, not polish, are required. The perception that only the top institutions produce the top candidates is without foundation. Without context, minimum grade requirements can exclude the talented.

International goals encourage collaboration, so there is an opportunity for business to drive change in partnership with like-minded organisations, with education, and through conversations with governments and regulators. There is knowledge to share about how to counteract a 'why not me' reaction in those not eligible, and how to approach conversations armed with appropriate definitions and language, in a way that respects families who have been doing their best. Above all, those with talent may want to explore a variety of unknown galaxies. To improve social mobility, it is right that there are many paths for them to walk.

How do you solve a problem like social mobility?

Freshfields Stephen Lawrence Scholarship Scheme

Stephen Lawrence was a talented 18-year-old who was murdered in a race attack in London in 1993.

He was not able to fulfil his dream of being an architect, but through the Freshfields Stephen Lawrence Scholarship Scheme his name inspires those from non-traditional backgrounds to pursue careers in commercial law and elsewhere in the City.

Launched in 2013, the scheme was devised to address the disproportionate under-representation of black and black mixed-race men from less privileged backgrounds in large commercial law firms. It is aimed at exceptionally talented first-year law students at UK universities and, since 2017, those on other courses at a small number of pilot institutions.

'The scholarship is attracting people who would normally see their race and background as an obstacle, and transforming these from self-perceived weaknesses to unique selling points which they can leverage to stand out in a competitive job market.'

Panashe Jinga, 2016 scholar



How do you solve a problem like social mobility?

Freshfields Stephen Lawrence Scholarship Scheme (cont')

We convene a unique partnership between universities and other leading organisations to identify candidates and provide them with fully funded insight day and assessment centre experiences. The latter employs innovative methods to test for potential and has no minimum grades requirement.

Once selected, scholars receive a range of benefits including a 15-month development and mentoring programme and a guaranteed training contract interview. There is also an offering for candidates who are not awarded a scholarship.

The activities are developed and led by Freshfields lawyers and other volunteers of all seniorities (222 last year), with support from Goldman Sachs, the Bank of England and, in the last year, Aon. Deloitte also contributed.

The scheme embeds values that challenge internal attitudes and approaches to social mobility and diversity – for example all assessors are given unconscious bias training and a pastoral approach is taken to mentoring.

The components are tailored to each scholar, including the timing of work experience, the

support and advice on offer and exposure to different career opportunities.

To date more than 300 students have been assessed and 55 scholarships awarded. Just under two-thirds of recruitment-stage scholars have found roles in large commercial law firms, leading barristers' chambers and investment banks, or on masters programmes. With the 2019 scheme now launching on campus, our work to improve access to legal and non-legal careers continues.

'I humbly believe that being involved in someone's progression, however small that involvement may have been, has been an incredible experience and one of the biggest achievements of my life.'

University sponsor on a scholarship-winning student

'Working with the scheme is an invigorating and valuable way for us to continue our mission to promote the public good.'

Miles Bake, Bank of England's Legal Directorate

'The impression the scholars left with Aon was universally and overwhelmingly positive.'

Selene Brett, UK Chief Counsel, Aon

13

scholars have accepted training contracts at Freshfields

150+

candidates have received career coaching and feedback

2,400+

hours contributed last year by 222 volunteers

3

major clients involved as key supporters, with others contributing

Responsible business and clients

We take our own commitment to responsible business seriously. At the same time, it's important for us to be aware that our clients are on their own journey in becoming more responsible businesses.

This provides an opportunity to partner with them in delivering activity in sustainability, diversity, inclusion and community investment. However, it is also core to our business: our role as trusted adviser to many of the world's multinational enterprises means we can help our clients navigate a landscape that is rapidly changing.

United Nations Global Compact principles



Why is a corporate law firm talking about sustainability?

As legal advisers, our role is to help our clients manage legal and compliance risk in transactions, contractual negotiations and in the law courts. So far, so familiar. And that is precisely why we are talking about sustainability.


Sustainability is changing the business operating environment. This is largely driven by the concerns around the effects of climate change, resource scarcity and growing inequality, and how this is impacting our ability to meet the needs of a growing and increasingly globalised population.

Many of these challenges affect the business community directly, and require companies to adapt to changing circumstances, manage their assets in a different way in order to minimise their environmental footprint, and ensure the rights of people are protected. This is what will give them the licence to operate.

But business is also an integral part of the solution. Achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will require society as a whole to work together: policy makers, civil society organisations and the business community. Today's companies have a critical role to play in helping achieve the transition to a sustainable and just economy through the innovation, drive, networks and human and financial resources that companies and investors can provide.

According to the UN, \$90tn of investment is needed by 2030 to achieve the SDGs, 80 per cent of which will have to come from the private sector. But the availability of finance is not the only critical aspect. The challenges the SDGs seek to address are complex and multijurisdictional, and require the alignment of a wide range of stakeholders.

Addressing these types of complex challenge is something that businesses around the world, including many of our clients, do on a daily basis. It is what made them successful in a so-called 'VUCA' world: Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous.

As corporate lawyers we are no different. First, we must manage our [business in a responsible way](#)  but we can also help society achieve positive, sustainable outcomes by working with our clients to help them manage and resolve complex societal challenges while delivering value for shareholders.

We support our clients on their own sustainability journeys, helping them 'future-proof' their businesses by managing legal and compliance risk, but also in helping them capture the business opportunities that sustainability can offer.

Our core areas of activity provide us with the skills and expertise to help our clients tackle the world's most pressing challenges with particular emphasis on three issues.

Sustainable finance

Financing the SDGs through traditional means such as project finance but also through new and innovative forms of finance, such as crowdfunding, and green or social impact bonds.

Climate change

Increased regulation and shareholder activism are forcing companies to reconsider their exposure to carbon risk, including the decarbonising of their assets.

Human rights

The legal landscape for business and human rights is rapidly changing. Global companies must increasingly evaluate, respond to and respect human rights as a legal and ethical obligation, both within their operations and throughout their supply chains.

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Why is a corporate law firm talking about sustainability?


We believe this to be enlightened self-interest as the business case for sustainability is strong: resource efficiencies lower costs and increase security of supply, understanding and anticipating policy change as well as integrity mechanisms reduce compliance risk, sustainable product lines generate new sources of revenue, while a positive reputation enhances customer and employee attraction. And last but not least, all of these drive shareholder value.

‘No business can seriously set out to create an unsustainable business model, and by thinking hard about its future, will be more likely to solve threats to it and find new opportunities.’

Sir Ian Cheshire, member of the Freshfields Responsible Business Advisory Board

We have appointed a global client sustainability partner to further strengthen our ability to deliver our clients' sustainability needs.



The annual [Global Business Forum](#) , co-hosted by Freshfields and Columbia University's Richard Paul Richman Center, explores the challenges facing business in a globalised economy. The 2019 Forum will address the challenge of resource sustainability.

Why is a corporate law firm talking about sustainability?

We have advised on over

20%

of the world's social impact bonds, funding projects that promote access to opportunity.



We advised on the financing of a range of renewable energy projects including wind farm power projects in Uruguay, the Netherlands and Belgium, and the first project bond financing of an offshore wind farm worldwide, the 330 MW Code Wind 1 transaction.



We hosted a global webinar exploring the most recent legal developments in relation to climate change.



We acted on a range of low-carbon transactions including the proposed acquisition of the Green Investment Bank from the UK government and the €1bn acquisition by ERG of the Italian hydro business from Eon.



Over 40 lawyers are active in our Global Business and Human Rights Group, providing advice to clients and sharing thought leadership.

Over
18,000 views

Our [Freshfields Human Rights blog](#) has featured over 65 pieces by our lawyers on the intersection between business and human rights. These have been viewed over 18,000 times.

Key performance indicators

Indicator	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Total number of employees	4,859	5,060	5,446	5,753	5,230	5,220
Women partners (per cent)	12	12	13	14	14	15
Gross carbon footprint per capita (tonnes CO ₂ e ^{*)} ***	4.66	4.64	4.48	4.14	6.01	6.08
Gross direct and indirect greenhouse gas emissions – scope 1 and scope 2; fossil fuels and refrigerants; electricity (tonnes CO ₂ e ^{*)} **	15,672	15,105	15,638	14,525	12,302	10,859
Total gross indirect greenhouse gas emissions – scope 3; business travel (tonnes CO ₂ e ^{*)} **	11,324	13,438	12,972	11,723	17,356	21,219
Gross carbon footprint (tonnes CO ₂ e ^{*)} **	26,997	28,543	28,611	26,249	28,083	33,569
Global water use (m ³)**	143,103	83,457	167,859	147,075	149,030	151,662
Global waste disposal (tonnes)**	1,708	2,483	2,510	2,444	1,828	1,609
Global paper purchased (reams)**	228,989	214,944	207,977	195,346	169,922	149,409
Employees involved in pro bono and community investment programmes (per cent) [†]	37	39	44	36	50	49
Hours contributed to pro bono and community programmes [†]	60,878	79,105	74,336	67,969	66,092	63,149
Total community contributions, including management costs (£m) [†]	10.48	15.46	13.83	14.66	15.66	17.46
Participation in UK payroll giving (per cent)	5	5	5	5	5	5
Turnover (£bn)	1,229	1,278	1,245	1,285	1,337	1,403
Profit per equity partner (PEP) (£m)	0.94	1.65	1.37	1.54	1.65	1.73

*Co₂e = carbon dioxide equivalent.

**Our environmental data has been assured by Carbon Footprint Limited.

[†]Our community investment and pro bono data has been assured by Corporate Citizenship.

All data in red has been restated due to more accurate data found through the assurance process.

Key performance indicators continues on the next page

Key performance indicators

Employee profile by gender in 2017-18 (per cent)

Indicator	Men	Women
Partner	86	15
Associate	54	46
Legal trainee	46	54
Other fee earners	41	59
Business services	31	69

Global workforce by region in 2017-18

Region	Employees
Asia	426
Continental Europe	2,311
MENA	96
UK	2,072
USA	315

Pro bono

Indicator	2016-17	2017-18
Number of clients	287	286
Number of matters	518	500
Number of hours	49,850	51,625
Percentage of lawyers involved	47	44

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