



Staffordshire
Chambers of
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UN GLOBAL COMPACT – Communication on Progress

Period covered by this Communication on Progress:
From: September 2019 To: March 2021

Part 1: Statement of continued support

Date: 1st June 2021

To our stakeholders,

Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce UN Global Compact Communication on Progress

I am pleased to confirm that Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce reaffirms its support to the United Nations Global Compact and its Ten Principles in the areas of Human Rights, Labour, Environment and Anti-Corruption.

Staffordshire Chambers is the leading membership organisation in Staffordshire offering business support. We provide training, knowledge and guidance to support business growth within Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. As business experts we act in the public interest offering insights into the economy that help to shape government policy and regulation. We also deliver government-funded business support programmes.

This is our annual Communication on Progress, describing our actions to continually improve the integration of the Global Compact and its principles into our business strategy, culture and daily operations. We also commit to sharing this information with our stakeholders using our primary channels of communication.

Our vision is to improve the prosperity of all residents in Staffordshire. Interpreting this in terms of the Global Compact means being an ethical business, committed to upholding the dignity and rights of all people, protecting the natural environment and working against corruption in all its forms.

Yours sincerely,

Sara Williams
Chief Executive





Part 2: Description of actions and Part 3: Measurement of outcomes

Human rights

Assessment, policy & goals

We believe everyone has a right to a decent standard of living. We support freedom, equality, and the right to our own beliefs. We support the right to a voice, a safe place to work and live, an education and good health. We believe that we have a duty to protect these rights for everyone.

We support the rights of our employees to a safe, healthy working environment, fair pay and protection from workplace harassment, including physical, verbal, sexual or psychological.

We are committed to supporting the vulnerable, disadvantaged and abused within society whenever we see an opportunity.

Implementation

We ensure that employees are provided with safe, suitable and sanitary work facilities, including drinking water, kitchen and shower facilities. We re-arranged our offices so that staff who were unable to work from home were able to work safely in the office during the Covid 19 pandemic. All staff receive health and safety training annually. We are committed to the principle of a living wage and in April 2021 intend to increase the pay of the lowest paid employees in the company by 10% above the Real Living Wage.

We have a stated a Dignity at Work Policy and a Domestic Abuse Policy. These form part of our Employee Handbook. We hold monthly company meetings for all members of staff to ensure employees have a forum to voice any concerns or issues and to reinforce our team ethos.

We deliver employment support and training to refugees through the Positive Pathways Project. We encourage support of community-based charities. We train domestic abuse champions within our organisation and among our members. We work with the National Literacy Trust and promote these activities through our communication channels to our employees and membership.

Measurement of outcomes

We have met all government guidelines relating to Covid 19 secure working practices. We have had no workplace accidents or near misses during the period of assessment. We are an accredited employer with the Real Living Wage Foundation.

During the period under review, our Positive Pathways Project Leader won an award and the project has been expanded. It now employs 3 people and is offering support to many more refugees.

10 members of staff have joined the Investors in Community initiative which supports local charities. We have trained 5 members of our own staff as domestic abuse champions and many more within our member organisations.

We received a letter of thanks from the National Literacy Trust for our help in distributing books across the city of Stoke-on-Trent to charities which support vulnerable families, refugees and asylum seekers, domestic abuse victims, vulnerable youth, those suffering from food poverty and homeless families.





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Labour

Assessment, policy & goals

The organisation does not participate in any form of forced or child labour.

We support the rights of our employees to equality of treatment and freedom to join a trade union. We try to ensure that no employee is discriminated against because of their age, gender, race, sexual orientation or religious beliefs or because they have a disability.

We want to support and inspire women in business and encourage greater gender equality within our own organisation and our membership. We want to continue to develop the health and wellbeing of our employees. We would like to achieve greater racial diversity in our organisation, membership and governance.

Implementation

We have worked to promote awareness and compliance with UK reporting on modern slavery guiding our members to the adoption of best practice.

We have a stated Equal Pay Policy, Equality & Diversity Policy, Grievance Procedure Policy, Maternity Policy, Shared Parental Leave Policy and a Health and Wellbeing Policy. These form part of our Employee Handbook.

We have a Health and Wellbeing group to support employees physical and emotional wellbeing. We pay for employee health support packages – a health cash plan, access to GP services and confidential counselling helpline. We promote this through our communication channels and encourage our members to do the same.

We train members of our workforce in various areas of mental health and wellbeing to benefit our employees and customers. During the Covid 19 pandemic, staff were given additional training in handling difficult conversations to help them support members better and care for their own emotional wellbeing.

We support professional development through training courses for our staff and for our members.

We operate a Women's Wealth & Wellbeing Network with events to educate and support women in business. This network is promoted through our communication channels. We work to encourage BAME and women business leaders to join our Chamber Board of Directors and Chambers Council.

We have written and implemented a Social Value Charter, rolling this out to businesses in 2021. We have a Social Value Forum which meets quarterly.

Measurement of outcomes

We hold the Gold Award for Investors in People and a Gold Wellbeing award from Stoke-on-Trent Council. We are a Disability Confident accredited employer and have signed the Mindful Employer charter. We have provided mental health support training to around 20% of our workforce.

We have signed the Armed Forces Covenant to support employment rights of reservists and ex-military personnel and we have achieved a Silver Award from the Employer Recognition Scheme.

The current level of female members of our governing bodies is around 30%. In November 2021 we will have a woman President.





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Environment

Assessment, policy & goals

We are a service-based organisation and as such do not have a large environmental impact, however we try to operate with CSR and Sustainability at the forefront of our minds at all times. We aim to reduce our environmental impact as much as possible and try to encourage our members to embrace these ideals.

Implementation

Our Quality, Environmental and Sustainability Team works to ensure the Chambers offices are reducing waste and working towards Net Zero. We have fitted solar panels to the main Chamber building and we provide an electric vehicle charging point for employees and visitors. We reduce the environmental impact of commuting by promoting a cycle to work scheme and allowing staff to work from home.

We have an established Energy, Environment and Sustainability Business Forum for members to share best practice and a Rural Business Forum to provide a space for business involved in agriculture, horticulture and rural affairs to share best practice and shape policy decisions.

During the Covid 19 pandemic all our Forum, Council and Board meetings were conducted online. Our intention is to continue in this way wherever possible to keep our environmental impact as low as possible.

We have undertaken an environmental audit through the Staffordshire Business Environment Network (SBEN) partnership. We organised our own litter-pick around the local retail park when the usual council-run initiative was cancelled due to Covid.

Two staff members are taking part in the UNSDGs Ambition Programme and will be setting up an SDG working group to help embed these ideals into the organisation.

Measurement of outcomes

We hold ISO 14001.

As a result of the SBEN audit, we installed LED lights throughout the main office building.

We have maintained a good level of engagement in our Energy, Environment & Sustainability Forum and our Rural Business Forum despite the pandemic through moving meetings online.

A large proportion of employees now work from home at least some of the time.





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Anti-corruption

Assessment, policy & goals

As an organisation with close links to local and national government, we could be vulnerable to bribery from lobbyists and to corruption in other forms. As we operate state-funded initiatives and grants, we could also be vulnerable to fraud.

It is our policy to conduct all our business in an honest and ethical manner. We take a zero-tolerance approach to bribery and corruption and are committed to acting professionally, fairly and with integrity in all our dealings and relationships.

Implementation

We have an Anti-Corruption & Bribery Policy and an Anti-Fraud Policy. These form part of our Employee Handbook and employees are asked to review these regularly.

We ask all our Board members to formally declare their interests annually. We ask all employees to sign a Declaration of Interests form annually. This is counter-signed by their Manager.

We operate strict internal and external procedural and record-keeping processes. These processes are audited internally and by our commissioning partners. Our governance recruitment procedure is also monitored by internal and external auditors.

We operate a Whistle-blowing Policy to protect staff members from unfair treatment resulting from reporting suspected misconduct.

Measurement of outcomes

There have been no instances of bribery, corruption or fraud identified in any of our operations.

