

**cowshed**



**United Nations**  
Global Compact

**Communication on Progress**  
2021



**Campaigns that work.  
Clients we love.  
Causes we believe in.**

## Statement of continued support

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

This is our second Communication on Progress and we are proud of our achievements since our last report. We have taken great strides to implement the principles in to our business strategies, our culture and our day to day operations and have further ambitions to advance our own ethos as well as the societal goals of the Global Compact.

Our progress and commitments can be viewed by all on our website: <https://www.wearecowshed.co.uk/our-commitments/>

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Ben Francis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Managing Director  
21.10.2021

# Human rights

**Principle 1:**

support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights and;

**Principle 2:**

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

## Our key achievements

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Cowshed remains committed to ensuring our people, our clients and our suppliers are represented, respected and protected.

It is company policy to only work on projects and with people we believe contribute to our mission. We continue to scrutinise our clients, workforce and supply chain and refuse to take on business or employees who don't share or practice our values.

We have transformed our policies to make sure they are fit for purpose in a post-pandemic world, strengthening and clarifying our approach to agile working, inclusivity and equal opportunity. All employees receive a monthly working from home allowance and are equipped to work from both home and our offices safely and efficiently.

Our workforce is predominantly under 30 and will be disproportionately affected by the forthcoming increase in National Insurance contributions. To offset this, we have implemented a 1.25% pay uplift across the board with immediate effect.

We have radically enhanced our benefits package to better reflect the needs of a team which is growing ever bigger, ever more diverse and located across the country. Our benefits are designed to be accessible by everyone, from interns to directors.

## Our key achievements

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In February 2021, we were the first agency in Wales and one of only a handful in the UK to be awarded Blueprint Ally Status for our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. Our internship for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic comms pros – another Wales first - was recognised as the best internship in the UK at the 2020 PRCA awards.

We continue to take on pro-bono and reduced rate work to support the eradication of human rights abuses. Recently we have supported Race Council Cymru to get over 1,000 businesses in Wales to sign a zero-racism policy and worked with Mind Cymru to make fair access to mental health a government priority.

## Our future ambitions

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Cowshed has no direct experience of human rights abuses, and we plan to keep it that way.

We will continue to make clear our commitment to our staff and the people we work with by:

- Publishing our code of conduct and insisting to see similar declarations and policies from our clients and suppliers
- Remaining steadfast in our promise to only work with people and businesses that promote social justice, equity and sustainability - and who are authentic and transparent in that mission
- Completing the 23 Blueprint Commitments to gain full Blueprint status

# Labour

**Principle 3:**

uphold the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining;

**Principle 4:**

the elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour

**Principle 5:**

the effective abolition of child labour; and

**Principle 6:**

the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.



## Our key achievements

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We care passionately about creating and nurturing a working environment and culture in which people can be open, make the best use of their talents and enjoy the right conditions and opportunities.

We don't tolerate discrimination of any kind and have worked hard to become an inclusive employer of choice as set out over the next few pages.

### **Investing in our people**

We continue to invest in our talent and cover all costs for employees at every level to attend training and personal development activities in their specialist fields. This year members of the team have become Chartered Practitioners, Google accredited and qualified by AMEC – the international standard for measurement and evaluation.

We have recently joined the Institute of Leadership and Management and everyone with line management responsibilities is on track to receive training to help develop them and their people.

We have taken on both our BAME internship interns – one as a full time junior multi-media producer and the other as a part time campaign assistant to support her financially and professionally during her studies.

All employees remain free to join a union, have the right to collective bargaining and access to a fair hearing for any grievances.

# Our key achievements

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## **Transforming our policies and practices**

In addition to upgrading our policies and benefits, we have advanced our personal development processes, introduced enhanced and non-discriminatory parental care entitlements, announced our menopause and pregnancy loss policies, and commissioned an external review of our recruitment practices.

Employees have actively participated in the production of these new initiatives and - in addition to our existing taskforces for Inclusion, Wellbeing, and Culture - are encouraged to give continuous anonymous feedback.

## **Removing financial stress**

We have always paid living wage. This includes our full and part-time employees, our interns, our cleaners, our suppliers, basically anyone we work with. This year we made it official and gained Living Wage Status.

As well as working from home allowances, investment in equipment, advice helplines and tax-deductible benefits, crisis loans are available to our employees to help remove financial stress and provide peace of mind when they need it most.

# Our key achievements

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## **Supporting our people's wellbeing**

The pandemic has accelerated the mental health crisis and we have a duty of care to our employees to ensure they are healthy and well looked after, particularly with more people in the business lone working.

We have carefully selected our benefits providers to remove barriers to accessing services that promote healthy lifestyles and a healthy work life balance – such as cost and location. This includes remote GP access, a 24-hour counselling helpline to support stress, anxiety, bereavement and family issues, local gym discounts and online lifestyle, wellbeing and fitness programmes.

## **Diversifying our workforce**

We recruit talent based on skills over education, qualities over qualifications, ambition over age, passion over experience.

To promote equal opportunities, we are Blueprinted, a Disability Confident Employer, an Autism Aware business and a signatory to Welsh Government's Ethical Employment in Supply Chain Code of Practice and adhere to the principles of these accreditations.

We have committed to publishing our diversity data annually and have made our anti-slavery policy public on our website.

## Our key achievements

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Our work to be a fair, inclusive and progressive employer has gained us recognition. We are Wales' consultancy of the year (CIPR), UK's small consultancy of the year (CIPR) and UK's medium consultancy of the year (PRCA). We were also voted one of the most exciting places to work in Wales (Business Insider).

**“We were thoroughly impressed by Cowshed’s people-centred culture, promotion of strong mental health, and their strategic development on diversity including their work for BME practitioners, their achievement of Blueprint Ally status and their work on the Living Wage.**

**“A great approach to CPD, specifically working to get staff to become CIPR Chartered Practitioners.”**

CIPR judges 2021



## Our future ambitions

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A key objective of our business strategy for 2021/22 is to retain and grow talent at all levels of the business, regardless of age, gender, race or location. We have set targets to ensure our team is representative of Wales across all demographics.

We already have plans to build a blind recruitment strategy and to operate a more inclusive interview process to aid in this holistic approach to building our workforce. We will act quickly to rectify any shortfalls identified in our upcoming recruitment review.

We have employed a Diversity and Inclusion consultant to hold us account to our promise to represent the community we work in and to help ensure our business practices are equitable.

In addition, we aim to:

- Complete the 23 Blueprint Commitments to gain full Blueprint status
- Challenge our Culture taskforce to champion our commitments and ensure our values are embedded in all our decisions
- Gain accreditation from Investors in People
- Ensure at least one in five people in the team become mental health first aiders

# Environment

**Principle 7:**

support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges;

**Principle 8:**

undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility; and

**Principle 9:**

encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies.

# Our key achievements

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2020 marked the beginning of our journey to act on our promises to better our impact on the environment, as a business and in the services we deliver for our clients.

## **Reducing our consumption**

We continue to recycle, use cloud-based systems and choose second hand where we can. Our recent office refurb has been furnished with vintage, upcycled products. In addition, we have removed office waste bins to encourage even better recycling practices.

We planted 1,000 trees earlier in the year as part of our ongoing partnership with Size of Wales to offset our emissions and have introduced a cycle to work scheme in our inclusive, sustainably conscious benefits package.

## **Taking it seriously**

The introduction of hybrid working has significantly reduced our carbon emissions with more people opting to work from home, walk or cycle to the office and conduct meetings virtually.

Last year we launched our environmental policy and started to benchmark usage of resources so we can set goals to reduce our consumption, introduce more initiatives to offset our footprint and work towards our ambition to become carbon neutral.

This initial work has resulted in us achieving level 2 Green Dragon Environmental Standard.

## Our future ambitions

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Benchmarking and tracking progress, promoting greater individual responsibility for sustainability and improving our impact on the environment will be a key focus for 2021/22.

Our plans include:

- Conducting a review of our IT systems to find more sustainable solutions
- Scrutinising our supply chain so we can be confident we are working with the most environmentally conscious suppliers
- Working with external expertise to advise on greener ways to deliver our campaigns, passing these learnings on to our clients to widen the impact
- Appointing environmental champions within the business to ensure company wide accountability

Our new Sustainability Director will be responsible for driving forward our environmental ambitions.

In addition to sustaining our Green Dragon status, we will be kick starting our action plan to gain ISO 14001 EMS standard and become a B-Corp organisation.



# Anti- corruption

**Principle 10:**

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

## Our key achievements

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Cowshed is signed up to the UN's anti-corruption call to action in support of eliminating corruption and promoting fair competition in the marketplace.

We pride ourselves on being a collaborative agency and believe in paying people fairly for their contributions in our campaigns.

We always seek to grow Welsh businesses wherever possible. Many of our most trusted suppliers are Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises or sole traders – they are ethical, sustainable and share our values.

We have grown our team remotely during the pandemic and brought employment to rural areas of Wales, breaking down the barriers to historically city centre-based opportunities.

We are one of ten agencies on the Welsh Government National Procurement Service. To support stretched services on the framework during the pandemic, we offered our services free of charge, resulting in us donating more than £40K of business to NPS customers.

## Our future ambitions

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To hold ourselves up against our signatory of the call to action, our next steps are to:

- Develop and role out a formal code of conduct to all employees, clients, suppliers and stakeholders
- Upskill our people to understand the corrosive effects of bribery and corruption around the global and ensure they are championing doing business in the right way.

# **Delivering the Ten Principles is the responsibility of everyone at cowshed.**

Progress will be monitored at monthly culture; wellbeing; and inclusion taskforce meets and quarterly leadership meetings.





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