

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY POLICY

The Partners believe that community and social responsibility revolves around the understanding of the impact our business has on the environment, the welfare of individuals, the community and the sustainability of the world's resources. Running the firm in the local community goes beyond making profits and acquiring wealth and we therefore acknowledge our obligation to consider the wider interests of our clients, employees and the community in which we function.

A responsible approach in these areas can lead to greater efficiencies, lower costs and an enhanced reputation as a responsible service provider and employer. We have written this policy with the UN Sustainable Development Goals in mind, specifically the following goals:

- Goal 3 – Good Health and Wellbeing
- Goal 4 – Quality Education
- Goal 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities
- Goal 13 – Climate Action
- Goal 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

The person responsible for the policy is the Practice Manager, Debora Sanderson.

The policy will be reviewed at least annually.

Health and Wellbeing (Goal 3)

The health and safety of our staff, clients and other visitors is high on our agenda. Through the firm's HR Strategy, we aspire to become the region's employer of choice for lawyers, secretaries/personal assistants and support staff and seek to achieve this by the application of best practice in the management and development of our people, maintaining our Lexcel accreditation and having effective mechanisms in place to communicate with our staff and understanding their concerns. We encourage input from staff via regular departmental meetings as well as during our annual appraisal process.

The firm offers flexible/hybrid and home working, time off for dependents and social activities. Staff are also given their birthday off, generous annual leave allowance to take as they wish and additional paid leave at Christmas time. The firm aims to help staff improve their health both at work and in day-to-day life. For example, the firm provides fresh fruit and vegetables for staff to snack on during the working day and filtered water. The firm encourages the use of public transport through discounted travel schemes.

We have two trained Mental Health First Aiders who are available to signpost staff, disseminate information, and help spot the signs and symptoms of mental ill health amongst our staff. We share well-being top tips and information regularly and also provide staff free access to an Employee Assistance Programme and Well-being Platform – Health Assured.

We also provide free financial wellbeing webinars and top tips via our bank and a free one to one consultation about finances with our bank for any staff who would like this. We also have a Christmas savings scheme.

If our clients are in need of health and wellbeing support we can signpost them to charities and sources of further support which they may access for example for funds for travel. We have bought clients essentials like a diary so they can manage court dates more effectively in the past.

We have good working relationships with local domestic violence organisations who we can call on for advice when necessary.

Our visitors are cared for in the first instance by our reception staff who make sure they are comfortable and offered refreshments. The relevant solicitor would check in advance of the client has any access requirements. We have staff who are dementia friends and have experience with learning disabled people. We also use interpreters when necessary.

Supporting Good Quality Education (Goal 4)

The firm supports six work placements annually for college/university students interested in a career in law. Members of the firm also attend Careers Fairs at local universities annually. We donate prizes to students at both Northumbria and Newcastle University and staff sometimes assist in activities taking place in the university such as judging/mock trials. We also provide a limited number of work placements to school age children (usually aged 15-16).

In addition, we provide an ongoing bi-weekly placement in our operations team to a student with a number of disabilities from Percy Hedley School.

The firm also invests heavily in the training of new and existing staff encouraging and paying for relevant accreditations etc.

The induction process is comprehensive for new staff and ensures the new staff member has site of all departments within the firm and meets all personnel.

IT and security training is continual and all training is documented on Compliance Caddy.

In addition, the firm employs trainee solicitors each year. At any given time there are around eight trainee solicitors within the firm at various stages of their two year training programme.

Sustainable Cities and Communities (Goal 11)

As well as our support for cycling to work and public transport promoting clean air (mentioned under Goal 13 below). The firm also helps contribute to building sustainable cities and communities through supporting local, national and international causes/charities as well as local businesses.

Support for Charities

David Gray Solicitors LLP and its staff supports a number of charities. The firm will respond to disasters by organising collections.

Staff regularly take part in sponsored activities including:

Great North Run in September
Chronicle Sunshine Run each June
Great Legal Walk Newcastle
Macmillan Coffee Morning in Autumn
Red Nose Day
Northern Frontrunners LGBT5K Run each July
Christmas Jumper Day (various charities)

In addition, the firm has close connections with a number of Women's Aid and Domestic Abuse organisations and refuges and homeless support organisations e.g. The People's Kitchen. We receive countless charity requests for raffle prizes and support when we can.

Support/Attendance at Local Events

The firm has a long tradition of supporting and attending local events:

Newcastle Legal Walk
Mental Health Awareness Day

Sponsorship & Donations

The firm often sponsors and donates (both money and supplies) to local organisations such as Northumberland Domestic Abuse Service, FareShare North East and various local Football Clubs. The firm regularly donates raffle prizes including e.g. champagne and a free will to various charitable fundraisers. We also sponsor the Northern Frontrunners LGBT5K Run and International Women's Day activities for North East Youth.

Supporting Local Businesses

At David Gray Solicitors LLP we believe that by investing in the infrastructure of the local community we can help to enrich our relationship with the local community and enhance the work that we do.

We support local businesses who are able to supply us with goods and services. Currently the Firm has long standing arrangements for the provision of photocopy machines, electrical, plumbing and office equipment, furniture, stationary supplies, design and printing, cleaning and staff benefit advice. Our policy is to deal with suppliers who themselves have adopted sustainable business practices, support the local community, use raw materials and/or supply products that are eco-friendly and save waste.

Environment/Climate Action (Goal 13)

We are committed to minimising our impact on the local, national and global environment and we encourage our employees and all those with whom we do business to do likewise.

The firm will aim to:

- Encourage the efficient and least environmentally damaging use of energy; cycle to work scheme, annual travel schemes e.g. metro pass;
- Encourage the use by ourselves and our suppliers/contractors of environmentally sound and sustainable resources;
- Reduce the quantity of waste produced to a minimum and recycle waste material wherever possible;
- Offer employees a safe, hygienic and as far as possible, an attractive working environment;
- Look to use environmentally friendly resources wherever possible e.g. environmentally friendly cleaning products, biodegradable cups for water dispensers.
- Continue to ensure our website produces as little carbon as possible, it is currently grade A rated: <https://www.websitecarbon.com/website/davidgray-co-uk/>

Driving forward actions to reduce the firms' impact on the environment is the responsibility of the Practice Manager.

Free Legal Advice (Goal 16)

As well as our commitment to Legal Aid in Family, Crime, Court of Protection and Mental Health, our lawyers have a long tradition of supporting and providing advice at various centres throughout the region, often free:

- Training on legal rights to local charities/organisations/businesses
- Members of the Free Wills Network and Cancer Research Wills Scheme
- Regular advice sessions at the Citizen's Advice Bureau
- Occasional pro bono work

Donations to and support for the Access to Justice Foundation/North East Legal Support Trust e.g. participation and sponsorship of Newcastle Legal Walk, the Great Legal Bake