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Corporate Social Responsibility Strategy 2022 - 2025



Summary

Welcome to our Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Strategy.

Unitas is a value led organisation that is clear about its role within wider society. To engage in CSR means that, in the ordinary course of our business we operate in ways that respect our social, environmental and economic responsibilities.

Unitas's mission and values are the guiding principles for the way we behave and how we work together to create a stronger and more successful business, making positive contributions to improve the lives of those within the areas that we work and achieve a long-term sustainable future.

Our Mission is: *to maintain and improve homes and properties through planned investment and efficient maintenance.*

Our Vision is: *to create a positive local impact and provide opportunities within the communities that we operate.*

Underpinning our mission and vision Unitas has a set of organisational values and behaviours that direct and define how everyone at Unitas performs, these are:



Our Commitment

Unitas is committed to improving our local communities and maintaining the City Council's housing stock and public buildings to ensure that we provide decent homes and buildings where people can live, work and thrive.

Year on year we will invest millions of pounds through planned projects to improve the housing assets across the city. Our commitment to CSR will become evident through the engagement we will have with our workforce and in our local communities. It will also be reflected in the investment we will make in our environmental approach with an emphasis on protecting and enriching our environment.

Our belief in these principles is reflected in both our vision and our approach to business planning and continuous improvement.



How we will make an impact

Our CSR Strategy aims to integrate responsible practises into everything we do. It has four core commitments which have been developed to reflect our mission, values and objectives, these are:



Within these four areas there are also a number of action areas we have identified that will have the most impact, please see the action plan in Appendix 1 which highlights these focus areas.

Workplace

We are committed to support and develop our employees in the workplace, by providing appropriate, exciting, individual development opportunities, applying our business values and innovative thinking to inspire excellence in people. We also understand the importance of having happy and healthy staff to achieve our objectives.

To ensure that all staff are competent and able to carry out their duties, we invest in their training and professional development. Through positive leadership we inspire, empower and motivate individuals to make a difference.

We actively promote staff welfare and invest in their wellbeing by providing wellbeing champions, mental health first aiders and offering many wellbeing initiatives.



Workplace

- *Valuing and investing in our staff*
- *Developing employees by offering suitable training*
- *Investing in the wellbeing of our workforce*

Community

We aim to enhance and engage with the local communities within which we work. We offer high quality training and employment opportunities for our residents, service users and the local community. Unitas will continue to offer work experience, apprenticeships and volunteering opportunities to those living within our local communities. We have gone the 'extra mile' by providing at least one apprenticeship placement per year as part of our legacy for Care Leavers to give them an opportunity to improve their life chances.

We work with schools and colleges in the community to promote the opportunities that are available within the construction industry to people from all backgrounds and abilities. We offer workshops and specialist talks to and also carry out environmental projects, such as providing bird boxes, bug houses and planters from recycled materials.



Community

- *Positive impact by supporting community initiatives*
- *Raising money for local charities*
- *Providing career opportunities to those living within the local area*

Marketplace

We always conduct our business with integrity and respect to human rights. We are committed to building and maintaining high standards with our suppliers. We demonstrate an innovative, professional approach and deliver high quality maintenance and refurbishment services that are sustainable, customer focused and respond to current events.

We have a Responsible Procurement policy and have developed procurement rules, which support sustainable procurement in order to procure goods, works and services in a responsible way ensuring value for money for our residents and communities. All of our procurement contracts include commitments to ethical procurement, including to verify anti-slavery and other relevant requirements. We manage and support our supply chain and suppliers treating them fairly and with respect.

We have an interim Growth Strategy in place and will be developing a new long term strategy for growth for 2023 onwards.



Marketplace

- *Responsibly managing our supply chain*
- *Supporting and encouraging suppliers, treating them fairly and with respect*
- *Combining ethical procurement with value for money*

Environment

We have an Environmental Policy that demonstrates our commitment to reduce our environmental impact. Our Environmental Group has developed an action plan to drive forward environmental improvements within our business operations and within the local environment. We have a robust waste management policy standard that all service streams follow and 100% of our waste is recycled. Our scrap metal funding is paid back into our Helping Hands fund to assist local community groups. We have a fleet of vehicles that includes electric and hybrid. We offer a staff Cycle Salary Sacrifice Scheme where staff can hire or purchase a bike or equipment and a car scheme called Tusker where staff can sacrifice a fixed amount from their salary each month in exchange for a brand new electric car.



Environment

- *Encouraging protection of the environment*
- *Developing new methods to improve recycle/waste infrastructure*
- *Respecting our responsibilities to reduce our carbon footprint*

CSR achievements – 2018 to 2022

Projects

Unitas, alongside its suppliers and contractors, has carried out an extensive range of projects including:

- Providing staff and vehicles to carry out an emergency food parcel delivery service to residents in Stoke-on-Trent during the Covid 19 pandemic.
- Providing staff time, skills and materials for the Macari Homeless Centre.
- As part of our CSR arrangements one of our suppliers painted seven rooms at Hanley Park Lodge and also providing an opportunity for a service user to learn painting skills.
- Working with one of our contractors to provide 640 school lunches during the half term school holidays to provide a lunch for families that were struggling financially.
- Presenting a virtual workshop to 7 BTEC students and 2 lecturers at Stoke-on-Trent College about our different roles and career opportunities, work experience and apprenticeships.
- Delivering items to local groups and charities on behalf of the Lord Mayor's charity.
- Providing two multi skilled joiners, an apprentice and two vans to help DIY SOS Big Build to create a community garden at Fegg Hayes.

Helping Hands Fund

The Helping Hands Fund has been set up to invest and empower our residents and the local communities we work in to create a positive impact. The fund is made up from money received from weighing in scrap metal and any fundraising events we hold. Local people, community groups and charities can apply for funding to help make a change in their local area. From 2019 to 2022 we have awarded £7,560 in grants which has included:

- Stoke Warriors Football Club - purchase of new football strips.
- Stoke on Trent Children in Care Awards Event.
- The Donna Louise Christmas Jumper Appeal.
- School lunches for half term holiday clubs.
- Provide two external doors for a local charity.

Apprentices

Each year Unitas is committed to the recruitment of a variety of apprentices from 2018 to 2022 we have appointed 25 apprentices.

| Trade | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 |
|--------------------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Gas Engineer | 7 | | 2 | |
| Plumbing & Heating | 1 | | | |
| Joiner | | 4 | 2 | |
| Electrician | | | 2 | |
| Finance | | 1 | | |
| Business Admin | 5 | | | 1 |
| Total | 13 | 5 | 6 | 1 |

Social Value

From 2019 to 2022 Unitas has secured the following in social value.

| Year | £ |
|--------------|------------------|
| 2019/20 | 137,615 |
| 2020/21 | 723,278 |
| 2021/22 | 623,549 |
| Total | 1,484,442 |

Delivering the Strategy

CSR is an extension of Uritas's traditional role and links closely with our vision and values. It lies at the heart of our business and is closely associated with our priority of making a local impact and providing opportunities to improve and sustain our communities.

As a business, CSR reinforces the need to act with honesty and integrity whilst maintaining our principles. It is about embracing our wider responsibilities, looking at how we can make a positive impact on the local area, environment and marketplace. This can be achieved by creating a satisfied workplace where our employees feel valued and involved and by improving the environmental sustainability of our operations.

We aim to work so that in the ordinary course of our business we operate in ways that enhance society and the environment. We want to build an impressive track record of investing in added-value activities to gain more positive outcomes. We will strive to work beyond the objectives outlined in this strategy to achieve this.



We are committed to embedding CSR throughout the business, to enable us to do this we will take the following important steps:

Ownership

The CSR Co-ordinator is responsible for the day to day monitoring of the strategy and providing updates to the Board on the progress of the actions. They are responsible for ensuring the funding and CSR investment is achieved in line with the business metrics. The Senior Leadership Team is responsible for monitoring the strategy at a Corporate and Strategic level. Every staff member within Unitas is able to contribute to the organisation's CSR objectives. Some service areas and key staff will make a greater contribution through the ownership of certain actions.

We will ensure that our employees have the tools and resources required to deliver this strategy.

CSR Co-ordinator

We have a dedicated CSR Co-ordinator who is our champion for the four core areas and ensures that our commitment to CSR is embedded throughout the business; workplace, community, environment and market place.

They actively motivate employees and key stakeholders to ensure that the CSR objectives are delivered by maximising CSR opportunities, implementing and co-ordinating a range of activities ensuring that public relations prospects are capitalised.

CSR Steering Group

The steering group focuses on the development and completion of the action plan that delivers on priority objectives. The CSR objectives are incorporated into existing working groups to ensure they are mainstreamed within our businesses.

Performance measures

We measure our performance to ensure that our CSR plan is delivering its aims and objectives and to ensure it translates our vision, aims and objectives into measurable targets.

Unitas has a robust inhouse social value monitoring system in place to monitor and ensure that the social value commitment of each project is fulfilled to benefit the community, economy and environment in the area where we work.

Our CSR activity is reported to Unitas's Board and staff. We provide information to our customers and stakeholders promoting the social value commitment of Unitas, contractors and suppliers by:

- Providing updates in Unitas E-newsletter.
- Providing performance information in Unitas Annual Reports.
- Regular articles in customer publications.
- Unitas website and social media posts.

Our Commitment to Equality

Each priority area in this strategy considers all equality implications, and ensures that a wide variety of groups are represented in line with the Equality Act 2010.

Customer Engagement

The CSR Strategy and Customer Engagement Strategy closely align with each other and we will ensure that we report to our customers on the progress of the strategy through:

- Working with local community groups to enhance areas.
- Engaging with local schools and colleges to increase awareness of the opportunities within the construction business.
- Encouraging and obtaining feedback from customers to help continually improve our services.
- Providing updates in our E-newsletter.
- Providing performance information in our Annual Reports.
- Regular articles in customer publications.
- Our website and social media posts.
- Attendance at residents' meetings as required.

Appendix 1 – Action Plan

| 1. WORKPLACE OBJECTIVES | Achievements during 2019-2022 | Actions for 2022-2025 |
|---|--|---|
| <p>Ensure we value and invest in our staff</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitored policies to ensure that our staff work and operate in a safe environment and promote equality of opportunity for everyone. • Safety, Health and Wellbeing Policy with regards to working in a safe environment are in place. • Staff shout outs are in place where teams recognise when staff go above and beyond their normal duties. • Become a Fostering Friendly organisation and offer incentives and benefits to staff to support them being a Foster carer. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an e-card thank you system for staff to use within the business. Need to look at staff incentives e.g. gift card. • Obtain ISO Standards; 9001 Quality Management System, 45001 Health and Safety Management System and 14001 Environmental Management Standard. • Fostering Friendly promotion campaigns for staff and our contractors. |
| <p>Unlocking talent by developing current and future employees</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2019 an employee engagement survey was created and sent out to all staff. • Monthly 1 to 1's and annual PLANs. • Advertise job adverts internally. • Shared good news stories and achievements internally and in the social media. • In 2020/21 Wellbeing surveys were carried out to staff re: working from home/Covid pandemic. • Annual Apprentice of the Year Awards. • Obtained awards for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Gold RoSPA in the prestigious and internationally recognised Health & Safety Award. ○ Direct Works – 1st prize for Inspirational Employee and 2nd prize for team of the year The Macari Homeless Centre. ○ APSE - finalists in three categories in the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) Awards; Best Housing, Regeneration or New Build Initiative, Best Service Team: Housing, Construction and Building Service and Best Public/Private Partnership Working Initiative. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with our staff and contractors to set up community workshops and sessions in schools / careers fairs, etc. Host sessions on how to complete an application form / mock interview. • Develop learning and development plan following succession / workforce planning exercises. Led by SLT, encourage staff in their career development within the business. • Annual Apprentice of the Year Award. • Continue to submit applications for Unitas exemplary work; individual staff, team of staff, etc. • Monthly 1 to 1's and annual PLANs. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ British Empire Medal - for services to the community in Stoke-on-Trent, particularly during Covid 19. | |
| Educate and motivate staff in connection with CSR activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff briefing took place in June 2019 and all staff were briefed on CSR and given the opportunity to input their ideas. • Utilised the staff newsletter to keep staff informed and updated on business developments. • CSR updates provided in staff newsletter and social media. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue with CSR Steering Group meetings. • Continue briefings for staff to promote CSR activities. • Research good practice and develop a staff volunteering policy. |
| Invest in our workforce's wellbeing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up a Wellbeing Steering Group. • Produced a Wellbeing Strategy and associated Action Plan. Developed a Wellbeing Plan. Organised several sessions on an annual basis to focus on current health related issues. • 12 Mental Health First Aiders in place who offer confidential support and signposting to key services for staff. • 4 Domestic Violence Champions in place. • We improved employee's awareness through events, activities, demonstrations, and training on different aspects of health and wellbeing. Each year approximately 12,260 hours of sessions were offered to all Unitas staff. • Ensured that regular messages via the e-bulletin were sent out focus on the need to take regular breaks, etc. • Staff were provided with drinking water bottles. • Staff walks held in June 2021, October 2021 and April 2022. • Staff Quiz's held in July 2021, December 2021 and March 2022. • Staff eye sight tests were held in September 2021. • Staff "Movember" event held in November 2020 and November 2021. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wellbeing calendar of events for staff. • Ensure that Wellbeing information is provided to staff. • Continue with Wellbeing Steering Group meetings. • Continue with Awareness weeks/events. • Provide filtered water within the break out areas. • Create a seating area and vegetable patch within the office grounds. • Staff survey to ask staff what Wellbeing activities they would like to see organised. • Continue to carry out Staff Quiz's to raise money for Cancer Research UK / chosen charity. |

| 2. COMMUNITY OBJECTIVES | Achievements during 2019-2022 | Actions for 2022-2025 |
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| <p>Provide career opportunities for the local community / local students</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoted youth employment through the National Apprenticeship Scheme. Several apprenticeships supported to complete an NVQ, full support offered via the HR department. Unitas have employed 24 Apprentices between 2018 and 2022. As part of Unitas' legacy we now have 1 dedicated apprenticeship for a Care Leaver and they started in January 2022. We are a "Be the Future Employer" and we improve outcomes for young people leaving care around employability and skills. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer Apprenticeships each year, at least 1 post is dedicated to a Care Leaver. Support the Traineeships Scheme by providing several placements per year for young people to carry out work based projects. Offer Supported Internships to young people who have disabilities so that they can carry out work based projects. Offer one week's work experience opportunities for students. Offer one month of work experience opportunities for Care Leavers. Offer work placements for College/University students. Work with Staffordshire University and get students to film the various trades carrying out their day to day work and place them on our website to promote career opportunities. Armed Forces pledge to offer employment opportunities to veterans who originally came from Stoke-on-Trent. |
| <p>Raise money for our nominated charity as well as local initiatives / charities</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Unitas staff were given the opportunity to nominate their chosen charity; Cancer Research UK is the chosen charity for 18 months. Calendar of events was created to include national charity days. Promoted and organised various activities to raise money e.g. BBQ, Cake Sale, Charity Football Match. Monitored the amount of money raised and reported on an annual basis. Supported Donna Louise and Douglas Macmillan Charities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12 month calendar of events. Support Cancer Research UK Charity for 18 months. Target of £50k per annum. Continue to support the Lord Mayor's charity. Unitas staff to complete the Potters Arf Marathon run to raise money. Staff survey to decide local charity from April 2023 to March 2024. |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSR Co-ordinator is the Enterprise Advisor. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSR Co-ordinator to continue to support Stoke-on-Trent College. |

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| <p>Carry out the role of Enterprise Advisor on behalf of Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire Enterprise Partnership</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the development of a career's strategy within a local school or college. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support Stoke-on-Trent College with work experience, workshop events and career role presentations in college. Attend careers fairs to promote careers in the construction industry. |
| <p>Raise awareness of the Unitas Helping Hands Fund</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raised awareness of the fund to employees of Unitas and provide a menu list of the type of projects that can benefit from the grant funding. Renamed the fund Helping Hands. Fund renamed the Helping Hands Fund. Advertised in the staff newsletter (November 2020) and CSR page on the updated website (November 2020). Offered sponsorship to local sports clubs and community groups and promoted how bids can be made. Sponsorship policy produced in January 2020. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to provide CSR information about the Helping Hands Fund on the Unitas website and in social media posts (LinkedIn, twitter, Facebook, etc). Contractors can opt to pay their CSR contribution into the Helping Hand fund. |
| <p>Raise awareness of the Community Fund (City Council)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raised awareness of the fund to members of the community / Resident Associations, etc. and details on how to make a bid. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to raise awareness of the fund to members of the community / RA's etc. and details on how to make a bid. Sign post community groups or Resident Associations to the Community Investment Fund. |
| <p>Provide excellent customer care</p> | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To continually review our services to ensure that we are customer focused in all of our work as detailed in our Customer Engagement Strategy. We will publish the results of the customer satisfaction surveys on our website, newsletters, social media platforms and in our annual report. Produce a Customer Engagement Strategy in line with the Social Housing White Paper 2021 requirements. Provide customer care training to all staff. Introduce and monitor new service standards as required. Publish and implement the results of the customer satisfaction surveys. |
| <p>Get involved in Community projects</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supported a range of community projects including: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to support a range of volunteering projects. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Northwood Broom School Educational Work (recycle men, bug houses, bird boxes). ○ Unitas staff and Novus painted the Beverley Drive playground. ○ Provided staff to carry out emergency food parcel delivery service to residents in Stoke on Trent during the Covid 19 pandemic. ○ Unitas staff painted the main hall at Oakwood Road Community Centre. ○ Unitas staff carried out a litter pick in Bucknall. ○ Unitas Stores staff regularly collect and deliver goods for the Lord Mayors Charity. ○ Every January staff collect Christmas trees to raise money for the Dougie Mac charity. ○ Unitas volunteered 3 staff members time to help with the DIY SOS Big Build project to create a community garden at Fegg Hayes. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Unitas Stores staff will continue to collect and deliver goods for the Lord Mayors Charity. ● Continue to support the Dougie Mac charity and collect Christmas trees every January to raise money for their charity. |
| Provide Community workshops | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Worked with the Procurement Team to set up virtual interactive Quantity Surveyor (QS) Teams workshop for Stoke-on-Trent College. Two staff members presented information to 7 BTEC students and 2 lecturers at Stoke-on-Trent College about what is it like to work for Unitas, the different roles and career opportunities, work experience and apprenticeships, and what it is like to be a QS. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Visit local schools, Colleges and Universities to promote the variety of jobs within the construction industry. ● Set up a variety of workshops for the local community to educate them on home life skills, first aid, DIY, etc. |

| 3. MARKET PLACE OBJECTIVES | Achievements during 2019-2022 | Actions for 2022-2025 |
|--|--|--|
| Aligning ethical procurement with value for money | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Responsible Procurement policy and procurement rules ensuring value for money for our residents and communities. ● 100% of our procurement contracts include sustainable procurement commitments. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Continue to ensure that 100% of our procurement contracts include sustainable procurement commitments. ● Continue to support local supply chains by purchasing materials and goods locally. |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Incorporated principles into the procurement process. | |

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| Work on our investment campaign - To support local labour, suppliers and contractors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During 2020/21 over 70% of our contracts were awarded to local businesses. • Supported the local supply chain by purchasing materials from local suppliers and new fleet of 239 vans from Greenhous in Fenton. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold workshops for contractors on how to complete the necessary paperwork when bidding for contracts. • Organise trade events. |
| Encourage our suppliers to consider their social responsibilities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed a methodology for monitoring 'social return' on its investment. • Implemented a social value monitoring returns and value calculations process. • Set up monthly meetings with Procurement Team to obtain contract award information. • We monitored 100% of our contractors and supply chains to ensure they delivered their CSR commitment. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to monitor our contractors social value commitment to ensure that they deliver against it so that it benefits the community. • Encourage our contractors to seek a social value commitment from their contractors to maximise the CSR payback. • Over the next 3 years we aim to secure £2,000,000 of social value contribution within Stoke-on-Trent, alongside our suppliers and contractors. |

| 4. ENVIRONMENT OBJECTIVES | Achievements during 2019-2022 | Actions for 2022-2023 |
|---|---|---|
| Encourage protection and enrichment of the environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have an Environmental Policy that demonstrates our commitment to reduce the environmental impact. • Purchased 2 electric vans and installed electric charging points at our depot. • Purchased a new fleet of 239 vans that are fuel efficient. This is produced a saving of 46g/km CO2 per vehicle, which is an overall saving of 11,086 g/km CO2 for the whole fleet of 241 vans. They are now Euro 7 standard so they more environmentally friendly due to a large decrease in emissions. • 12 hybrid cars purchased for the Gas and Electrical servicing teams in 2021. • We have a salary sacrifice scheme where staff can hire the bike and equipment over a 12 month period and pay the costs from their gross salary to reduce carbon emissions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff hybrid working from home / office to reduce our carbon footprint. • Evaluate the carbon footprint saving from staff working from home during the Covid pandemic. • Encourage the workforce to take part in programmes such as; cycle to work, car sharing, etc. • More bird boxes, bee hives and bug hotels. Work with local schools to make bird boxes and bug houses. CSR Co-ordinator to work with local schools. • Seek funding from the Wildlife Trust to carry out tree planting with a local school / community group. • Purchase additional electric/hybrid vehicles to reduce our carbon footprint (bike, car, vans). |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Car scheme called Tusker where staff can sacrifice a fixed amount from their salary each month in exchange for a brand new electric car. • 3 staff benefited from a bike service under the cycle to work scheme. • Staff litter pick took place in the Bucknall Causeley Road and Causley Brook area; 26 bags of rubbish were collected. | |
| <p>Improve the recycling and waste infrastructure</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crisp bag recycling completed. • Recycling bins located in the kitchens. • As at June 2021 100% of our waste was recycled; the bulky household items were shredded and used to generate energy, the mixed construction waste was separated and used for hardcore and soil and the plasterboard was recycled and used for back boards. Asbestos is not able to be recycled and went directly to landfill. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recycle 100% of our waste. • Continue to source materials from local companies and employ local contractors to reduce the carbon footprint. |