

Responsible Business Report

2025-26



hcr law



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Why being a responsible business matters to us

We have always taken our responsibilities seriously: in how we run our business and support our people, in our contribution to local communities, and in the way we manage our environmental impact.

We recognise it's increasingly important to our clients, our current and future staff, and the communities our offices are based in, that we demonstrate the impact we're making. This report brings together the key areas that add up to being a responsible business.

I believe our approach is authentically HCR - staff-led, meaningful to those involved and grounded in our local communities - and that is why it works.



Rod Thomas, Managing Partner

“Passion for People feels a bit clichéd but it truly is the DNA of the firm.”

Investors in People Gold accreditation report

A year in review: 2025-26



Awarded Investors in People Gold accreditation

On track to achieve net zero

£153,000

raised for charities

Many volunteering hours



Launch of new, impactful early **careers** initiatives

Reduction in our mean gender pay gap



Net Zero

We are committed to removing carbon from our operations and wider business activities consistently each year and aim to reach a net zero position by 2040. This journey to net zero began in 2020 when we baselined our carbon emissions. We have developed a robust, science-based reporting approach and review our progress annually.

Our commitment to sustainability is reflected in the tangible progress we have made, even as the business continues to grow. Despite a 17% increase in turnover during 2025-26, we reduced our total emissions by 7%. We refurbished offices to improve energy efficiency, expanded our electric vehicle salary sacrifice scheme, and enhanced the accuracy of our emissions data.



40
electric vehicles

Ongoing success with our electric vehicle salary sacrifice scheme. At the end of March 2026, we had 40 vehicles on the scheme

Completed the refurbishment of our 105 High Street Worcester office, including secondary glazing and a more efficient heating system

“The steps we have taken, alongside ongoing and future initiatives - such as investing in renewable energy, supporting greener commuting, and rolling out carbon literacy training - demonstrate our resolve to lead by example. We remain firmly on track to meet our interim target, and our long-term goal is clear: net zero by 2040.”

Philip Parkinson, Net Zero Lead

Installed double glazed windows at our Hereford site

Moved to new, more modern and efficient London office premises in July 2025



Fundraising and community engagement

When we agreed our plans at the beginning of the year our strategy was clear – we wanted fundraising to be engaging and inclusive and we wanted to make sure we maximise every opportunity. We've achieved this by ensuring all activity is staff-led and meaningful locally.

Our approach is multi-faceted which drives engagement. There really is something for everyone in the firm to get behind, from 'Movember' to bake sales, and obstacle course races to collecting up foreign currency and converting it to funds for food.

In 2025-26 we raised
£153,000





Keeping it local

Over the years HCR has raised £2m for charities. Recent beneficiaries include The Myriad Centre, St Basils, Wintercomfort, Tŷ Hafan, Sue Ryder Duchess of Kent Hospice, Wye and Usk Foundation, James Hopkins Trust, New Hope Charity, St Richard's Hospice, DeafBlind UK and St David's Hospice Wales. **Each HCR office** chooses its own charities to support, ensuring donations make a local impact. The Partners pay all costs associated with delivering fundraising initiatives to ensure every penny raised is donated to charity. These activities not only raise significant funds but also strengthen connections across the firm.

 **Payroll giving
bronze award** 



of all money raised
for charity by HCR,
goes to charity

Flagship event: Chariots of Fire relay race, Cambridge

This annual six-person relay running race was created by one of our predecessor firms in Cambridge, in 1992. It's the largest single fundraising event led by the firm and in September 2025, 298 teams entered, raising £35,000 for Roald Dahl's Marvellous Children's Charity. The money raised went to fund specialist nurses and support for seriously ill children across the UK.

“Contributing to good causes and raising money for charity is a priority for HCR Law. I'm proud of our contribution and enjoy being part of a firm that gives back to local communities.”

Adam Finch, Fundraising Lead

Volunteering

Our commitment to community engagement goes beyond fundraising, extending into volunteering and wider support. Colleagues regularly volunteer at charity events, support careers fairs, participate in wellbeing initiatives and hold positions on boards such as governing bodies and local advisory groups.

Pro bono work forms a recognised part of our Responsible Business activity, helping organisations and individuals access support that might otherwise be out of reach. Lawyers are actively encouraged to take part in volunteering initiatives, developing skills while contributing meaningfully to causes that matter.



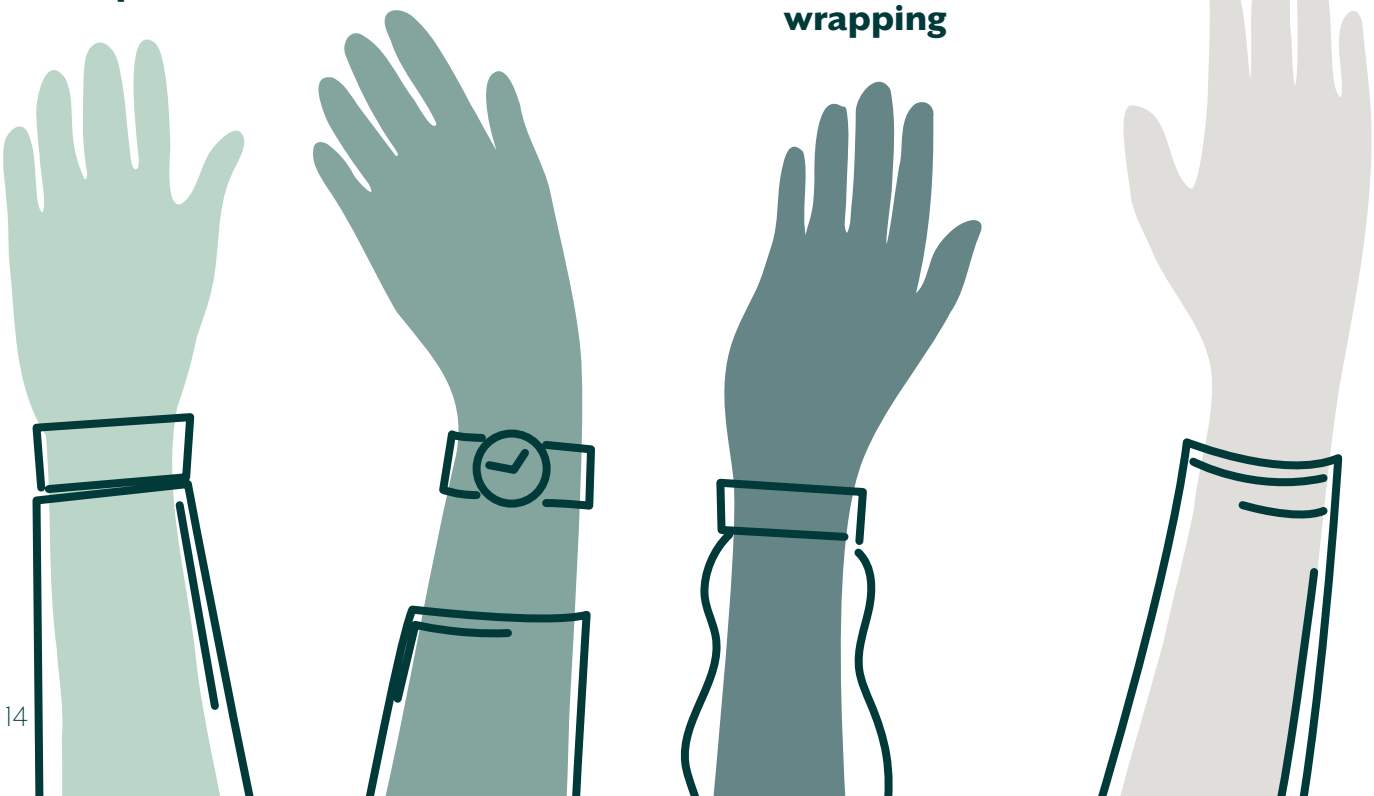
Examples include:

Upkeep of the Oncology department garden at Cheltenham Hospital

Buddy reading at local schools

Christmas present gifting and wrapping

Planting trees and hedges as part of the Nature Recovery Scheme in Ross on Wye



Maximising social impact through our business connections: The Impact55 Programme

Now in its second year, Impact55 was designed to support start-ups who are using technology to create a positive social or environmental change.

The programme awards packages of legal funding totalling £55,000 to successful applicants that can demonstrate their innovation is creating change relating to at least one of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The 2025-26 winner, CamGene Therapeutics, is a biotechnology company developing medicines to address the underlying cellular dysfunction that causes hearing loss, an area where no restorative treatments currently exist. Hearing loss has a significant health and socio-economic impact around the world. CamGene said “Impact 55 enables us to focus our budget on science rather than on the other things [like legal advice] that we need to run the business.”



impact⁵⁵

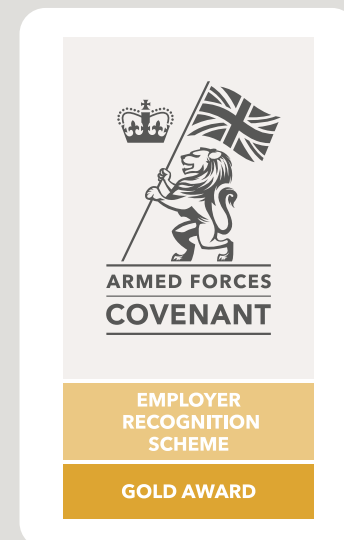


“ I feel very proud to be part of HCR and they have really invested in me. ”

Investors in People Gold accreditation report

Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award

We hold the prestigious Gold Award in the Ministry of Defence's Defence Employer Recognition Scheme, reflecting the firm's sustained commitment to supporting the armed forces community. The scheme recognises organisations that not only align with the Armed Forces Covenant but actively demonstrate and advocate support for service leavers, reservists and their families. HCR is one of a small number of law firms to hold this highest level of recognition, which we have maintained since 2019. We continue to play an active role in championing the value of the armed forces community in the workplace and across the wider business environment.



Early careers and education outreach

We work with universities of all types to access the widest range of talent. Our focus is on raising our profile as an employer of choice while building a sustainable pipeline, with an emphasis on long-term partnerships in the communities around our offices.

We have active links with 18 schools and colleges who benefit from engaging with our Early Careers team and our junior lawyers. Two standout Early Careers initiatives, both launched in 2025-26 are **HCR Spark** and the **Hewitson Grant**.

These programmes provide practical support, mentoring and real-world experience to students who may not otherwise have access to the legal sector. HCR Spark focuses on Year 12 students in Herefordshire, offering structured work placements, mentoring and financial support to help them explore a career in law and build confidence in their next steps.

Complementing this, the Hewitson Grant provides targeted support to students from non-fee-paying schools in Cambridge, combining funding towards legal qualifications with work experience within the firm to help remove barriers to entry. Together, these programmes reflect a broader commitment to developing talent, strengthening local communities and creating a more accessible and inclusive pathway into the legal profession.

We do not operate diversity quotas by limiting our talent pools to Russell Group universities; we are committed to widening access to opportunity, removing barriers to entry and ensuring that talented individuals from all backgrounds can develop successful careers with HCR.

Apprenticeships continue to be a priority for the firm. We want to ensure that we are providing alternative routes and access to the legal profession outside of the standard university pathways. This supports our social mobility goals. Solicitor Apprentices, CILEX CPQ, and licensed conveyancer apprenticeships widen access and create more gender-balanced pipelines, and this remains a key part of our strategy for the coming years.

“ People find the leadership at HCR very inclusive, empowering and encouraging of people to make decisions. They are enabling people to reach their potential by creating structured career pathways for people to progress through. ”

Investors in People Gold accreditation report



Staff wellbeing

Staff wellbeing is embedded across the firm, from policy through to day-to-day activities. For example, through our Smart Working approach which empowers staff to work from the place it makes best sense to for their day, to staff-led initiatives such as wellbeing walks, self-defence sessions, and book and yoga clubs.

In 2025-26 we ran a programme of nutrition focused sessions, covering topics from healthy ageing to endometriosis, neurodiversity, PCOS, men’s health, and mental health nutrition.

We also provide:

- Maternity mentoring
- Health and dental plans for all staff
- Gym membership contribution
- Cycle to work scheme
- Staff support fund for unexpected financial issues.

We’ve built an internal resource library sharing information on:

- Mental health guidance
- Physical wellbeing support (sleep, exercise, burnout)
- Menopause
- Financial wellbeing
- Carer support.

As with the other areas of our Responsible Business approach, wellbeing is led by our staff to ensure it is meaningful and locally-relevant.



“

You are always encouraged to take the lead and use your initiative.

Investors in People Gold accreditation report

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The firm has trained

Mental Health First Aiders



“

Wellbeing is something most people strive towards. Feeling balanced, contented and satisfied is important for our health as well as making us more productive and effective in our roles. Based on my own experience, I recognise the importance of wellbeing and its effect on the energy, drive and high-performance culture HCR is known for.

Charlotte Thornton-Smith, Wellbeing Lead

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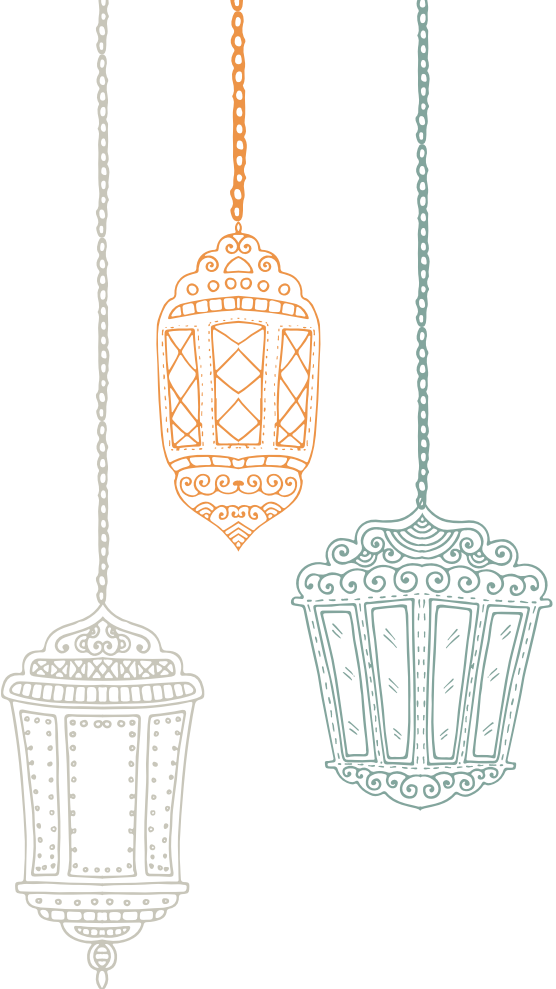
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Our approach to EDI focuses on widening and diversifying the firm's talent pool, enabling people from all backgrounds to thrive, and ensuring that talent is the determining factor in opportunity.

Our EDI commitment is focused on three strategic areas:

- HR/recruitment processes – Fair, unbiased, inclusive recruitment and progression
- Employee brand – Clear communication of what HCR stands for and embedding EDI into culture
- 'Grass Roots' approach – Stronger awareness, engagement, and manager accountability.

We participate in the Solicitors Regulation Authority's diversity data collection and provide a transparent view of the make-up of our workforce, enabling us to benchmark progress against the wider legal sector. This data plays an important role in shaping our approach to inclusion, helping us identify opportunities to improve representation and progression across the firm.



Embedding EDI into culture: What does this look like in practice?

This starts with building understanding. Colleagues are generous in sharing personal experiences and the EDI moments that matter to them - from reflecting on National Windrush Day, to talking about being a Carer during Carers Week, to celebrating religious festivals and recognising days like Social Mobility Day. We bring people together to share in each other's culture too, whether that's marking the breaking of the fast during Ramadan or celebrating Pride.

Colleagues tell these stories in their own way, through blogs, photos and videos, with others engaging, supporting and often acknowledging how valuable, and sometimes how brave, it is to share.

Gender pay and progression

We continue to take a transparent, long term approach to addressing our gender pay gap, now in our ninth year of reporting. Encouragingly, we have seen a reduction in our mean gender pay gap over the past year, reflecting the progress we are making through targeted investment in our people practices.

We are focused on strengthening progression pathways, introducing clearer career structures and pay frameworks across both fee-earning and support roles. Early signs show this is having a positive impact, particularly in improving outcomes within the lower pay quartiles. Alongside this, we continue to refine our bonus schemes, invest in learning and development, and support flexible working to ensure all colleagues have the opportunity to progress and succeed.



“

EDI matters to me because, essentially, it's about attracting the best talent for our firm. It doesn't matter where the talent comes from or what the talent looks like; all that matters is that the person is bright, ambitious and hard-working. When I entered the legal profession, I did not fit 'the mould'; I am female, I am part of an ethnic minority group and my choice of legal specialism was, back then, usually chosen by men. I am where I am today because someone took a chance on me and recognised that all these other factors should not determine whether or not I would be a great lawyer. What did matter was whether I was bright, ambitious and hard-working.

Arpinder Dhillon, EDI Lead

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Looking ahead

Our clients are at the heart of everything we do, and our approach to responsible business is really about how we support them day to day. We work with a wide range of clients – from individuals and families to businesses, charities and organisations across the UK and internationally – all with different needs and expectations.

We focus on making our services accessible, practical and responsive. That includes supporting vulnerable clients, working closely with charities and community organisations, and offering initiatives such as Wills at Work to help people access legal advice more easily. Our network of offices means we can provide a genuinely local service, while still having the reach to support clients wherever they are.

We aim to be straightforward, transparent and easy to deal with, building long-term relationships based on trust. Our teams work collaboratively to deliver clear, commercially focused advice, while recognising the wider social and environmental factors that increasingly affect our clients.

Ultimately, it's not just about meeting immediate legal needs – it's about helping our clients achieve their longer-term goals in a way that is sustainable and aligned with their values.

Going forward, responsible business remains central to how we operate and how we grow. Over the coming year, we will continue to build on the progress outlined in this report, with a clear focus on delivering meaningful, measurable impact for our people, our communities and the clients we support.

The law firm with a passion for people





Get in touch

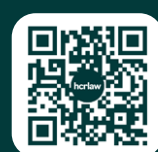
Our people are at the heart of everything we do. If you want to be part of a firm where you can grow, contribute and make a difference, HCR offers the opportunity to do just that.

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