



CharlesRussell
Speechlys

Responsible Business Report 2020

Get started >



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Care and connection during COVID-19

Supporting our clients, staff and communities in challenging times through investment and innovation

[Read on to find out more >](#)

Shaping a responsible business

This year we have all seen just how quickly and comprehensively the world can change, creating sudden and extraordinary new challenges for individuals, families, businesses and our society as a whole. This is our first Responsible Business Report. Many of the initiatives featured here were born long before COVID-19 gripped the planet. However, the more we evaluate the impact of the pandemic and our response to it, the more it is clear that our determination to run our business responsibly has guided and strengthened our decision-making and is key to the commercial success of our business – now and for the long term.



Simon Ridpath
Managing Partner

In my first year as Managing Partner, as I set out my vision for the firm, I want us to work hard to ensure our business decisions are sustainable and generate value for all our stakeholders. I want us to keep looking ahead, ensuring we are ready and able to support our people, our clients and our communities to navigate whatever economic, social or environmental challenges the future holds.

There is great deal of which I am proud of in these pages. In this first section, we feature examples of investments in our people, our infrastructure and in our social impact programme in 'ordinary' times that have helped us to stay connected with each other, with our clients and with our community during the COVID-19 shutdown.

"The launch of a new Charles Russell Speechlys Charitable Foundation this autumn will help us take this commitment to a stronger, fairer society to the next level"

You will read about the work we are doing to support staff wellbeing, our efforts to attract a diverse pool of talent to the firm and provide an inclusive work environment for all.

We report on the progress we have made to date improving our environmental sustainability by adopting best environmental practice, reducing waste, and empowering and encouraging our staff to make positive changes in their behaviour in the workplace and at home.

We also feature some of our Pro Bono work and community investment initiatives that are helping to level the playing field by improving access to justice, access to education and access to professional opportunities for disadvantaged groups. The launch of a new Charles Russell Speechlys Charitable Foundation this autumn will help us take this commitment to a stronger, fairer society to the next level.

But true responsibility as a firm of lawyers demands more. Just as we are concerned with our own environmental and social impact and committed to maintaining the highest standards of professionalism, governance and ethics, we recognise that our clients have corporate purpose, sustainability and environmental, social and governance risk top of mind. As responsible advisers to our clients, we must be guided at all times by our values and ensure that we:

- Chase solutions – going beyond the law to find the right approach;
- Look beyond – thinking long term and always moving forward;
- Stay grounded – providing an open, welcoming environment, ego-free and keeping things in perspective;
- Pull together – learning from our experiences and celebrating successes together.

I am immensely proud of who we are as a firm and excited about what more we can become. I look forward to reporting on our progress next year.

Creating a workforce for the future

The benefits associated with agile and flexible working practices are well documented, and include building a more diverse, productive and happier workforce.

We first set about introducing more agile working and flexible practices at the firm back in 2015. We wanted to help retain our female employees who faced pressures outside work, thereby improving our gender balance as partners and within senior management. We adopted a new agile working policy, which has seen a good take up from our lawyers to work from home, invested heavily in technology with tablet-laptop hybrid devices and incorporated more agile working practices on a day-to-day basis.

Delivering greater value

Today, a fifth of our staff have flexible working arrangements in place, and our agile working policy allows fee earners and those in some of



20%

of our staff have flexible working arrangements in place

our business services roles to work from home one day a week. This has proved beneficial for our staff, who have in turn, been able to deliver greater value to our clients. Indeed, in a survey of our staff in 2019, 91% of respondents reported noticing and/or experiencing positive benefits as a result of agile working. This new way of working also meant that we could respond swiftly to COVID-19, allowing us to maintain continuity in client care, reach more clients in crisis through Pro Bono projects such as our digital community legal advice clinics, and keep our colleagues healthy, supported and connected.

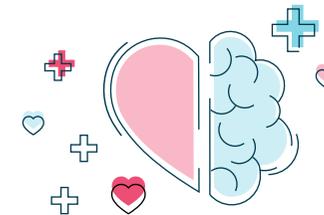
Adapting to lockdown

"On the day that the UK hit lockdown, our staff were able to unplug their machines, take them home and their system mirrored what they would have seen in the office," explains HR Director David Green, who helped lead the project to introduce more agile working and flexible practices at the firm. "Everything has worked incredibly smoothly. A real benefit from the lockdown will be proving to any doubters left within the business that agile working really is effective and increases productivity."

During lockdown, we launched a new hub with ideas, resources and activities to boost mental

91%

of our survey respondents reported noticing and/or experiencing positive benefits as a result of agile working*



and physical wellbeing among staff in this period of enforced remote working. Our mental health champions also hosted remote 'coffee shops' via WebEx to help colleagues stay in regular contact with one another.

This built on the support and training given during our Wellbeing Week in January 2020, which included a range of different activities and talks across six of our offices. Highlights included DIY health checks, personal safety training, a vegan food and drink tasting event, and knitting blankets for volunteer organisation **Project Linus UK** to distribute to sick, disabled or disadvantaged children.

Source: Charles Russell Speechlys Agile Working Survey 2019*

Images: Charles Russell Speechlys Wellbeing Week



Tackling advice deserts digitally

Working with **Legal Advice Centre** in London we pioneered webcam clinics to provide free family law advice via webcam to users of **Citizens Advice Plymouth**. The project helps tackle the growing problem of 'legal advice deserts' outside London where many people cannot afford a lawyer, get legal aid or access Pro Bono services locally.

Using the same technology we converted our evening Pro Bono drop-in clinic in Bethnal Green to a webcam service during the COVID-19 lockdown, enabling our volunteers to continue supporting access to justice from their kitchen tables.

"The results have been very positive, both in the feedback from clients and in the help that we've been able to provide to those in serious situations," says David Tully, Project Lead at the Legal Advice Centre for Citizens Advice Plymouth. "It really demonstrates a new way of working. The webcam model works well and there is no reason why we — or other organisations — couldn't set it up for other areas such as employment law."

Pro Bono engagement

Part of the broader challenge with Pro Bono work is how lawyers engage with it, says Eddie Coppinger, Director at the Legal Advice Centre in London, which is why the webcam model is so important. "Thanks to the technology, lawyers can take part from their desks," he says. "Long term, we hope the project will provide the sector with the appropriate tools to help increase participation."

"It's a really good model which has been vitally important during the COVID-19 pandemic. The technology is improving and people are getting far more comfortable advising clients virtually," agrees Joshua Green, a Senior Associate in our Family practice who helped set up the clinic and regularly volunteers.

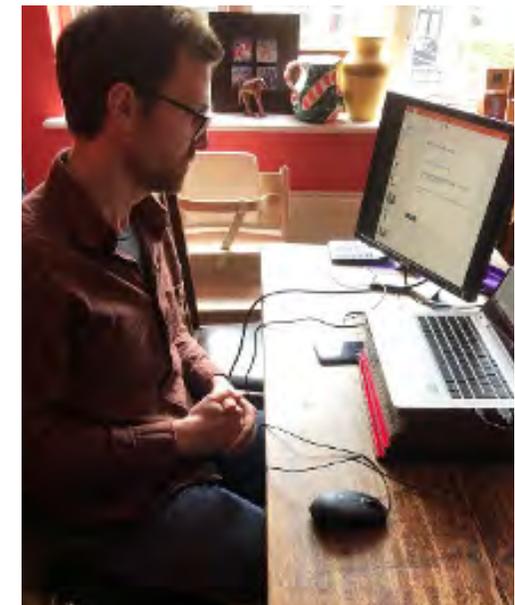
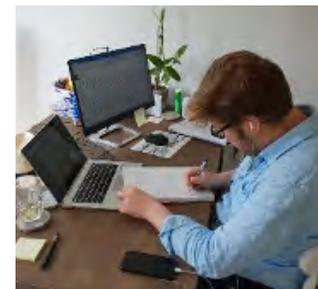
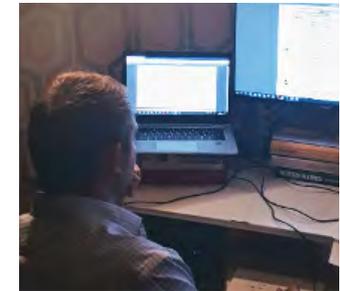
"The results have been very positive, both in the feedback from clients and in the help that we've been able to provide to those in serious situations"

DAVID TULLY, PROJECT LEAD AT THE LEGAL ADVICE CENTRE FOR CITIZENS ADVICE PLYMOUTH

Greater perspective

As well as making it easier for lawyers to engage with the project, thus extending its reach, the project has both professional and personal benefits for volunteers, says Joshua. "Talking to people from different walks of life is beneficial, in my view. It can give you a greater perspective, improving you as a lawyer whilst helping others. You're often faced with unique legal situations that you just wouldn't come across in your day-to-day job."

Images: Our lawyers advising Pro Bono from home during lockdown



Supporting frontline workers with Food4Heroes

Starting a business at any time has its challenges but doing so in record time during a global pandemic certainly adds complexity. Nevertheless, Northamptonshire businessman John Brownhill successfully set up **Food4Heroes** with his sister, Amanda Guest in a matter of weeks, bringing together local caterers and restaurants to provide free daily meals to frontline staff at NHS hospitals and trusts nationwide.

Thanks to Amanda's catering and restaurant contacts, and John's background in IT, they were able to put the necessary infrastructure in place quickly and use social media to drum up volunteer support. At the time of writing, Food4Heroes had distributed more than 230,000 meals to 43 hospitals in 11 counties across the UK.

"This help has enabled us to focus on finding our next hospital and volunteers, and delivering more healthy and nutritious meals"

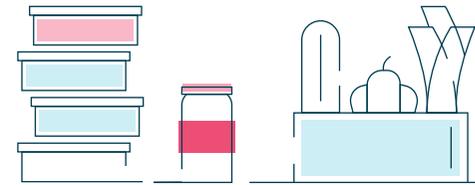
JOHN BROWNHILL, CO-FOUNDER, FOOD4HEROES

We were pleased to be able to bring our skills to bear on this important work by providing full service Pro Bono assistance and volunteer support to Food4Heroes. We advised on a wide range of issues including its structure, governance, charitable status (and conversion to become a community interest company), collaborative arrangements with NHS Trusts and Community Foundations, brand and data protection, and its contracts with volunteers.

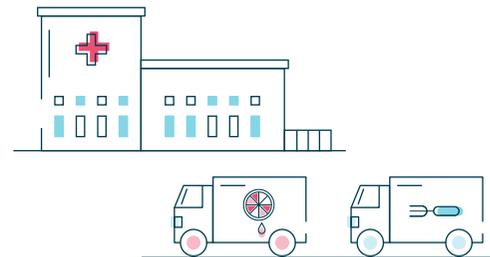
One step ahead

"We're set up to provide this kind of cross-service support," says Sarah Rowley, who heads up our Charities practice and led the project with Food4Heroes. "It is unusual to work for a not-for-profit organisation that is just starting out and gets so big, so quickly—it was a really unique set of circumstances. Within a matter of weeks its operations were all over the country and therefore our advice needed to stay one step ahead."

"Without this input I could have easily forgotten a number of things," adds John. "It has brought us a great level of comfort that we're not going to make mistakes that could be very costly and damage our reputation. This help has enabled us to focus on finding our next hospital and volunteers, and delivering more healthy and nutritious meals. It also puts us in a great position for the future once the COVID-19 crisis has passed."

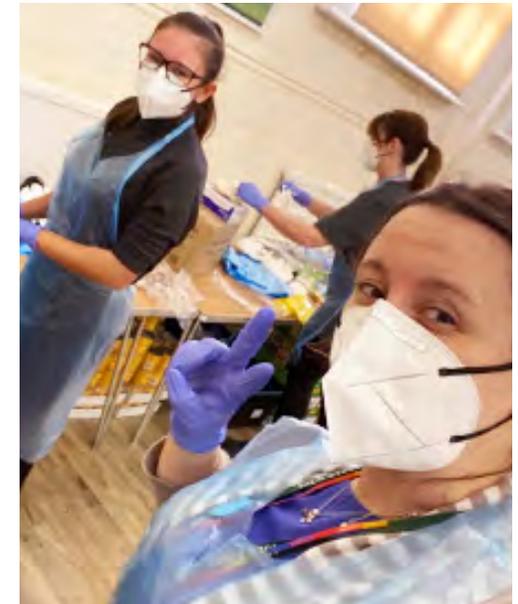


230,000 meals
have been distributed during the pandemic



43 hospitals
were supported in 11 counties across the UK

Images: Food4Heroes volunteers

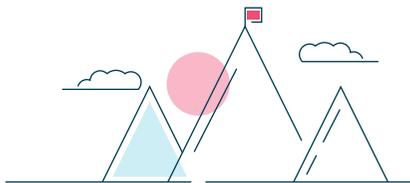




Building communities with Project Companion

Emmaus UK (our former Charity of the Year) provides a safe community home, social support and meaningful work to more than 800 'Companions'—formerly homeless people—across the UK. As Emmaus UK CEO Simon Grainge puts it: "Emmaus is an alternative to providing a hostel for somebody, it is a real sense of community that they can feel part of."

Each of the 34 charities in the Emmaus Federation is independent and has its own board of trustees and community. Up until March 2020, two-thirds of Emmaus' annual income—about £15 million—came from its 85 shops where Companions, staff and volunteers save thousands of tonnes of old furniture from landfill each year, restoring and upcycling it for sale. That traded income was suddenly turned off when the Government ordered all non-essential shops to close on 23 March due to COVID-19. With its communities forced to rely largely on existing housing benefits (their next biggest source of revenue), Emmaus launched an emergency appeal to help restore the day-to-day loss of income.



£20,000

The amount our staff raised "moving a mountain for Emmaus" in June 2020

We responded by launching Project Companion—a package of support for Emmaus that included fundraising, Pro Bono legal assistance and sharing best practice.

Emergency fund

Our staff donated and fundraised £20,000 for the emergency fund, including "moving a mountain for Emmaus" in June 2020, teaming up with colleagues to take on more than 20 virtual mountains.

At the time of writing, Emmaus has been able to channel approximately £150,000 from its emergency fund to those in need as well as making £500,000 of reserves available for last resort assistance from funds that it had originally pegged for developing new communities. It also accessed about £1m from the Government's Coronavirus Small Business Grant Fund.

Bridging the gap

"The biggest concern for our communities is the day-to-day loss of income," says Simon, speaking during lockdown, with pressures set to continue as shops reopen with new safety measures in place for COVID-19. "The emergency appeal and the money that we've been able to channel to the communities have helped cover some of that gap."

Images: Courtesy of Emmaus UK

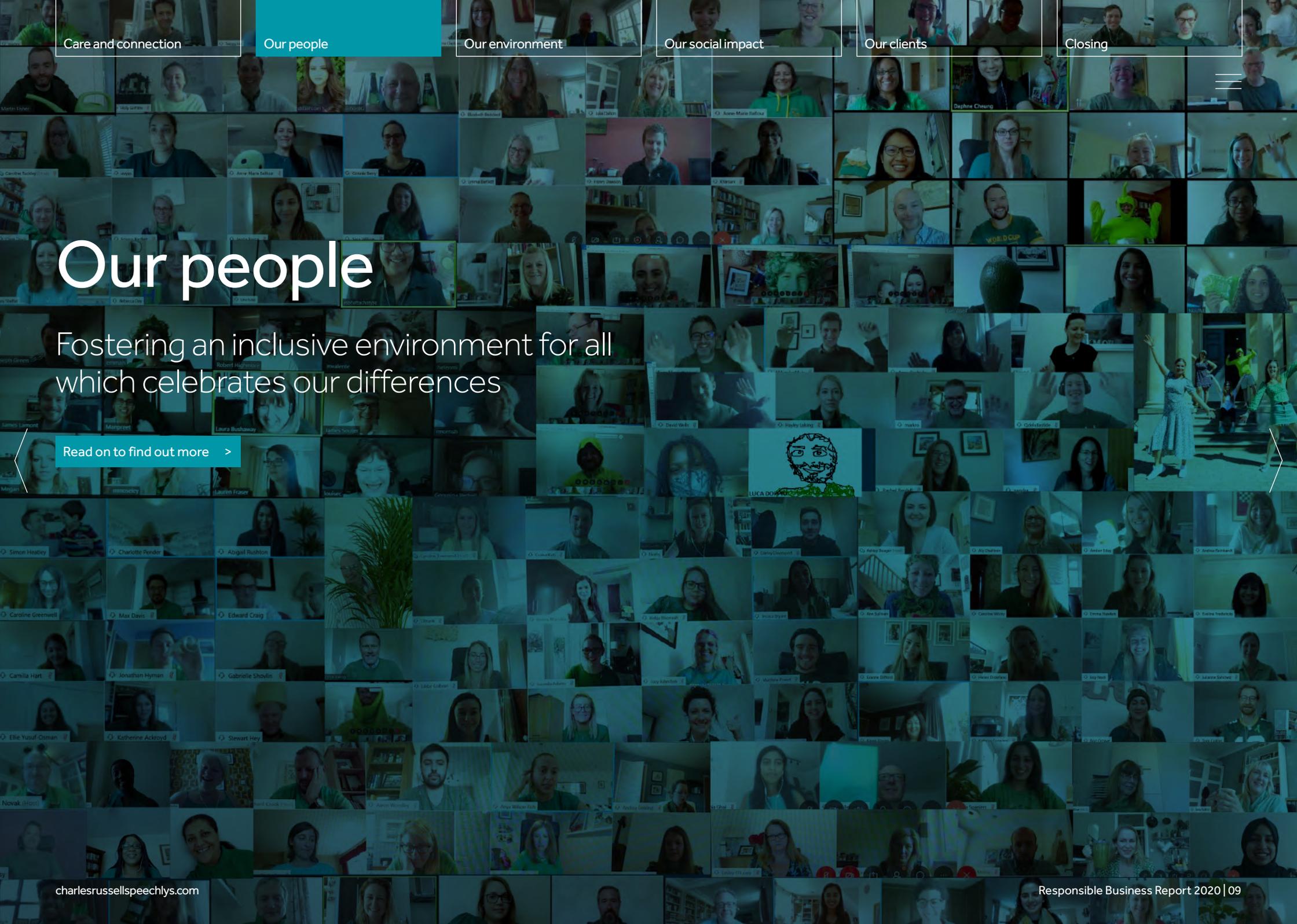


"Having Charles Russell Speechlys to help us with advice at the macro level is extremely helpful"

SIMON GRAINGE, CEO, EMMAUS UK

Our lawyers supplemented our charitable giving with Pro Bono advice. Real Estate Associate Richard Howes and Trainee Solicitor Daniel McDonagh worked with Emmaus Hampshire on licence agreements for Companions to occupy Emmaus Community premises, and Litigation Partner Manoj Vaghela and Associate Hannah Gornall advised on its business interruption insurance policies.

Simon says: "We try to fill the gaps that often develop for small communities as best we can. An issue comes up and they don't always have the capacity or the resources to do something about it. So having Charles Russell Speechlys to help us with advice at the macro level is extremely helpful."



Care and connection

Our people

Our environment

Our social impact

Our clients

Closing

Our people

Fostering an inclusive environment for all
which celebrates our differences

[Read on to find out more >](#)



Equal opportunities for all

The level of engagement with diversity and inclusion is incredible and is testament to the importance it has within the firm. As a people-centred business, we are committed to providing an inclusive work environment with equal opportunities for all; where everyone can bring their whole self to work and contribute to a diversity of thought, creativity and leadership.



Emma Bartlett
Partner, Employment

We want people to choose to work at Charles Russell Speechlys because wellbeing, diversity and inclusion are part of our culture. We also want our firm to reflect the diversity of our client base and the broad diversity of the legal talent pool.

These are priority commitments for the firm's senior management and supported and championed by staff across the firm—in particular through dedicated, staff-led, Diversity and Inclusion committees and networks.

Our initiatives include raising awareness of the lived experience of different groups in society, providing education, training and opportunities to engage with role models and celebrating our cultural, ethnic and religious diversity. Through activities like these, we work to foster connections between staff, to provide a support network for our colleagues, clients and candidates and to empower us all to be more informed and more effective allies. Our commitment to diversity and inclusion extends beyond our walls and into the community, as we engage with students of all ages to attract them to the world of work and to the legal profession through our school and social mobility programmes, and with excellent community organisations like **Opening Doors**.

This past year has brought with it unique challenges. I am extremely proud of the progress we have made—including our new top 25 ranking in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index for the legal sector. With the full support of senior management and the Diversity and Inclusion committees we were also quick to respond to the COVID-19 crisis and lockdown with a wide range of excellent resources, events and initiatives in place to support the mental and general wellbeing of our staff.

“This past year has brought with it unique challenges. I am extremely proud of the progress we have made—including our new top 25 ranking in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index for the legal sector.”

There is, of course, much more work to do. The killing of George Floyd by police in the United States earlier this year and the ensuing worldwide protests have shone a bright light on systemic discrimination against members of the Black community in societies across the globe, including our own. Our firm is not neutral in the face of injustice and we stand with the Black community and everyone who experiences racism and discrimination. We recognise that in order to take decisive, meaningful and sustainable

action in the fight against racism and inequality we need—as a first step—to improve our own understanding of structural injustice and the ways in which we, as a law firm and a responsible international business, can take steps—ourselves and in collaboration with others—that have real impact. We are working hard and devoting our resources to that and I look forward to updating you on our continued progress next year.



Balancing care and career

In March 2020, we marked International Women's Day #EachforEqual theme with a programme of events and activities, and invited all our colleagues to pledge a tangible action for the year ahead to support gender equality. Eight women documented their pledges and what the day means to them in a video for the firm's website. We also hosted an International Women's Day panel event where five of our female partners and associates showcased their careers and involvement in international work to inspire junior colleagues in the early stages of their career.

Alice Martin, who spoke on the panel, joined the firm in 2004 as a paralegal, then trained with the firm and is now Senior Associate in our Private Client practice. She moved to our Zurich office in 2016, where she helped grow the team and in 2019, set up Swiss City Parents, a network for professional working parents in Switzerland. "The experience I have had in Zurich and the firm's Family Friendly policies have made a huge difference to my work-life balance and have been massively positive for my career," she says. "If those who oversee you and your career operate in a way that is supportive and appreciative of family life then it can be tremendously successful."

Our range of Family Friendly policies are designed to support the work-life balance and caring responsibilities of our lawyers and support staff. We launched a Family Friendly Network in 2019 and our Carers Network was launched in 2017 to connect and provide a support network for working parents and those with caring responsibilities.

"If those who oversee you and your career operate in a way that is supportive and appreciative of family life then it can be tremendously successful"

ALICE MARTIN, SENIOR ASSOCIATE, PRIVATE CLIENT,
CHARLES RUSSELL SPEECHLYS

Visible role models

"The resilience and emotional intelligence that one acquires through balancing a career and parenthood or caring responsibilities are attributes that should be valued in the senior roles of partnership," says Alice, "and role models who demonstrate this at a senior level can be powerful for those coming up through the ranks: To partners who are carrying a significant degree of childcare or have important caring and family responsibilities, if you can be open about that it shows those a few steps behind you that it's possible to balance both responsibilities."

Images: International Women's Day 2020 pledges and panel event





Destigmatising mental health

Positive mental health and wellbeing is a priority for our firm. Our initiatives seek to provide support to staff, promote open conversation and tackle the stigma often associated with the subject.

As part of Mental Health Awareness Week 2019, we participated in the Lord Mayor of London's This is Me initiative, which aims to change attitudes towards mental health in the workplace and encourage healthier and more inclusive workplace cultures. This included launching a video and poster campaign, and supporting the Green Ribbon campaign, which invited staff to wear a green ribbon to visibly demonstrate their commitment to end the stigma on mental health. In 2020, staff showed their ongoing support by participating in a range of activities, including wearing green to team meetings in the Go Green and Be Seen campaign and sending 'kindness cards' to colleagues.

During our 2019 activities, we hosted an event at our London office with former Speechly Bircham Partner Richard Martin, who experienced a serious mental breakdown in 2011. He gave a talk about his own story and his work to raise awareness about the importance and impact of mental health and illness across the City through workplace training firm Byrne Dean. At this event, we launched our This Is Me video, featuring seven partners and staff talking about their personal experiences with mental health. Over 120 people attended the event in person, and a further 50 joined remotely from our Guildford and Cheltenham offices.

Open dialogue

Nick Hurley, Divisional Managing Partner, EPI (Employment, Pensions & Immigration) and Financial Services, took part in the poster campaign to highlight the importance of having an open dialogue about mental health and illness in the workplace after experiencing his own challenges with clinical depression.

"It's almost become de rigeur to talk about mental health," he says. "That helps destigmatise the subject and I wanted to play my part in that. I didn't want anyone to do what I did, which was to carry the illness around like a cross for several years

not feeling able to talk about it. I was worried about how it might be perceived and how it would affect my career, but it certainly hasn't held me back."

"I'm proud about how the firm reacted and continues to deal with mental health"

NICK HURLEY, DIVISIONAL MANAGING PARTNER, EPI AND FINANCIAL SERVICES, CHARLES RUSSELL SPEECHLYS

He adds: "Mental health is something that affects everyone. I didn't have the courage to speak up initially but when I did the reaction was very enlightened and human, and I'm proud about how the firm reacted and continues to deal with this particular issue."

To find out more about Byrne Dean's mental health work, contact Richard Martin on richard.martin@byrnedean.com

Images: Charles Russell Speechlys
Go Green and Be Seen campaign



170 attendees

were at our This is Me video launch, 120 in person in London and 50 remotely from our Guildford and Cheltenham offices



Mental health: In 10 numbers

Source: Charles Russell Speechlys

60+ champions

partners and staff at our firm have been trained as mental health champions to support colleagues experiencing issues



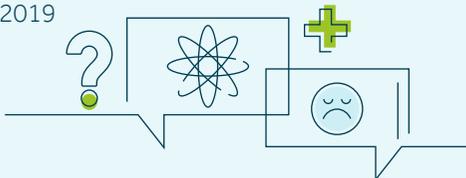
11 staff accredited

of our staff are MHFA England-accredited Mental Health First Aiders



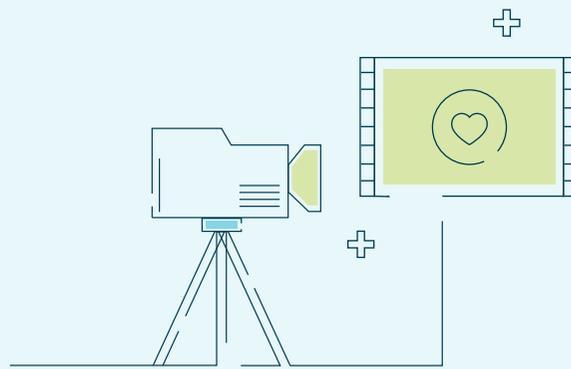
30 new sessions

trainee solicitor supervisors undertook a half-day training session on mental health awareness and starting open conversations in 2019



15 experiences

partners and staff shared their own direct and indirect experiences with mental health for our This is Me video and poster campaign in 2019



The number of online hits our This is Me 2019 poster campaign attracted on launch day

300 wore green

partners and staff from across the firm wore green for team meetings as a visible sign of support during Mental Health Awareness Week 2020



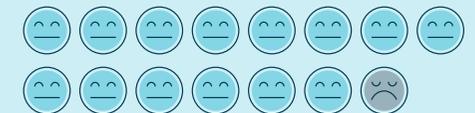
12 managing stress sessions

'Managing Stress in Challenging Times' training and 25 Mindfulness Meditation sessions have been run in-house since the start of lockdown



Law Society's Resilience and wellbeing survey in 2019

1,800 junior lawyers responded to the survey



1 in 15

had suicidal thoughts in the month leading up to taking the survey

Source: The Law Society



Raising awareness of LGBTQ+

LGBTQ+ activities are a key pillar in our diversity and inclusion work as we strive to create an environment where all our LGBTQ+ colleagues are supported and able to be themselves, regardless of gender identity and sexual orientation. These initiatives have gained traction over the past year and have seen us rank in the top 25 of the legal sector in the **Stonewall Workplace Equality Index** for the first time.

In the run up to 2019's Pride, which brings communities together in a show of celebration, protest, unity and solidarity, statements about the event were shared internally via our firm-wide weekly newsletter, display screens around the offices and through our intranet. We received glowing feedback about the firm's representation at our pre-Pride drinks at the Ambrose Cafe in Heal's on London's Tottenham Court Road, where we welcomed over 100 colleagues, members of LeGalBesT and our family and friends to wave off our colleagues who marched under the LeGalBesT banner.

"It's about building a culture and awareness within the office about LGBTQ+ as a live issue and people being more mindful of the language they use"

SAM LEAR, ASSOCIATE AND LGBTQ+ COMMITTEE CO-CHAIR, CHARLES RUSSELL SPEECHLYS

Open platform

We hosted a number of other events during the course of 2019, including a LGBTQ+ Allies evening event in London in July where members of our LGBTQ+ Committee shared their personal journeys, providing insight into some of the challenges they have faced and what is important to them. We also hosted trans and

non-binary inclusive training for our reception and recruitment staff to help actively promote diversity and inclusion.

Diversity in the workplace

Our Cheltenham office hosted two panel events with The Law Society for local law firms where the audience heard about diversity in the workplace, the role of LGBTQ+ allies and the importance of an inclusive workplace from the Law Society's Diversity and Inclusion Adviser Chris Seel, Paralympian and inclusion expert Claire Harvey, and our Associate and LGBTQ+ Committee Co-Chair Sam Lear.

"When I started out as a trainee it took me a good year or so before I was comfortable about coming out in the workplace," explains Sam. "It's about building a culture and awareness within the office that these things are live issues and people being more mindful of the language they use."

Image: Pride 2019 celebrations in London





Celebrating religious and ethnic diversity

We aim to represent and celebrate various religious occasions and different ethnic communities at key points in the calendar year. To mark Eid al-Fitr in June 2019, our Cheltenham office hosted an Introduction to Islam talk where an Imam from the Gloucester Mosque spoke about the principles of Islam and answered questions from staff.

All three of our UK offices celebrated Diwali together for the first time with a range of coordinated and colourful activities. In London, Rupa Lakha, a Partner in our Construction, Engineering & Projects practice, led a Bollywood dance lesson, while Syma Spanjers, a Senior Associate in our Employment team in Cheltenham adorned guests' hands with henna, and treats and henna were also enjoyed in our Guildford office. The events were organised by our Religion, Belief and Ethnicity committee as a celebration of the firm's cultural and religious diversity.

"It was a very inclusive, friendly and vibrant affair"

RUPA LAKHA, PARTNER, CONSTRUCTION, ENGINEERING & PROJECTS, CHARLES RUSSELL SPEECHLYS

"It was a very inclusive, friendly and vibrant affair," says Rupa. "It was just a nice way of allowing people to see each other in a slightly different context. People were in good spirits and the fact that my family got to come along and be part of it all was brilliant and something that involved all levels of the firm."

"This was about raising awareness, but it was also about inclusion"

SYMA SPANJERS, SENIOR ASSOCIATE, EMPLOYMENT, CHARLES RUSSELL SPEECHLYS

"It was a fantastic turnout for a Cheltenham diversity event," adds Syma. "Often when we hold diversity events, they are to raise awareness about inequality or discrimination, so there's always quite a powerful message to convey. This was still about raising awareness, but it was also about inclusion and done in such a joyful way that people were really engaged and wanted to know more."

Black History Month

In October 2019 we hosted a panel event to celebrate Black History Month and mark the centenary of the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act 1919, which enabled women to qualify as barristers or solicitors for the first time. Recently elected Deputy Vice President of The Law Society, I. Stephanie Boyce, and Hanh Nguyen, a Partner in our Corporate Restructuring & Insolvency team shared stories about their careers to date and their choices and challenges, and the resilience required to succeed.

Images: Charles Russell Speechlys Diwali event





Our environment

Embedding sustainability in our business and beyond for an innovative future

[Read on to find out more >](#)



Sustainability beyond our walls

After the 2008 financial crisis it took some years for sustainability to get back on the business and regulatory agenda. It certainly was by 2017, which is about the time that this firm really began to try and get a grip on environmental issues.



David Berry
Partner, Commercial

The decision to do so was taken by our Partnership Council, the body at that time responsible for the overall strategic direction of the firm. Since then, our people have been the best source of inspiration as to steps we can take to reduce the environmental impact of our business operations.

Most of the initiatives referred to in this report have come from them, channelled through our firm-wide Environmental Sustainability Task Force ("eFORCE", for short!). But, as you will read, it took an outsider, Pen Hadow, to hammer home the message that whilst our efforts to reduce, reuse and recycle may be laudable, we need to do more.

For a professional services firm it is not enough to focus only on the those three "R"s. Doing more means engaging with our rich and diverse range of clients and contacts to spread the message that we all need an approach that embraces the planet and people alongside the profits. We can do that by talking to our stakeholders. We can also do it by ensuring that we are ready to work with our clients to integrate sustainable thinking in their commercial relationships.

"Doing more means engaging with our rich and diverse range of clients and contacts to spread the message that we all need an approach that embraces the planet and people alongside the profits"

Recognising that business and private affairs around the world are for the most part constructed with a spider's web of contracts, we are enthusiastic participants in a collaborative project with other lawyers to develop new template contract clauses to help address the climate crisis ("The Chancery Lane Project", discussed in "Our Clients" section on page 37). This is in part demonstration of our determination to put a responsible approach to the environment at the heart of our client relationships.



Doing business differently

We are members of the **Legal Sustainability Alliance (LSA)**, an inclusive movement of law firms and related organisations committed to improving the environmental sustainability of our operations. As a leadership firm within the LSA, we are working to drive industry change around sustainability by contributing best practice and knowledge to the network, as well as taking positive action operationally to limit our carbon footprint.

In 2018, the LSA's carbon reporting tool measured our carbon emissions for the preceding year at 1.82 tCO₂e per employee—significantly below the average figure of 3.24 tCO₂e per employee for all LSA reporting firms. We continue to take steps to actively reduce our environmental footprint through our environmental sustainability task force, eFORCE (see *Reduce, Reuse, Recycle on page 19*), and regularly engage with our clients and staff on the subject.

"Charles Russell Speechlys is a really positive member of the Executive Group of the LSA, and as such, they are working hard to be leaders in their field, evidenced by the policies and practices they have put in place," says Amanda Carpenter, CEO of business consultancy Achill Management, which runs the LSA. "We are really pleased that they are part of the LSA and applaud the efforts they make."

Amanda believes law firms have an important role to play in the 'Green Recovery', not just in relationships with clients, but also in terms of setting policy initiatives. "In theory, firms could be at the forefront of pushing ahead these changes," she says. "We always say the firm needs to not just respond to clients, but to lead them. If you are going to influence client decision making to

be more sustainable, to look at their own supply chains and to be more responsible in terms of the environment and the planet, you have to commit to that too," she continues—"it can't just be lip service."

Greener travel

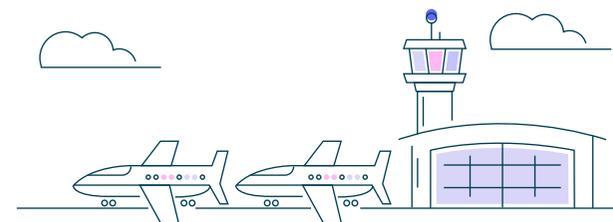
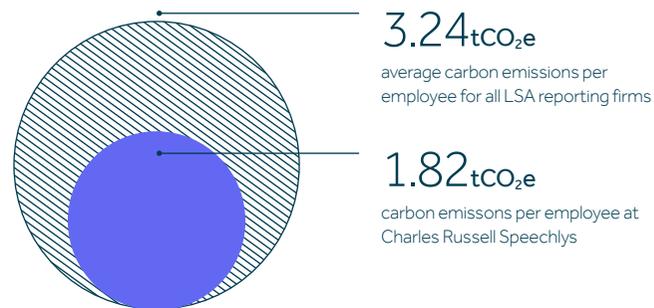
To this end, the LSA launched the No Fly Tracker tool to help law firms assess the carbon, cost and time saved while their teams have been grounded during lockdown. In doing so, it aims to enable firms to create an evidence base, which will influence future travel policies.

We are trialling the tool to see how it can help us recalibrate our own policies. A year-on-year comparison of our flight data during April 2019 and April 2020 showed a saving of 220 tonnes of CO₂ on London outbound flights alone—equivalent in energy to the electricity required to power more than 37 homes for a year.

"One of the biggest challenges law firms face in reducing carbon emissions is business travel, particularly by air," explains Amanda. "The enforced travel restrictions offer an opportunity to reset. Going forward, we need senior partners and leaders in those firms to model the behaviour they have had to adopt in the COVID-19 period."

Carbon emissions per employee

In 2018, LSA's carbon reporting tool measured our carbon emissions for the preceding year:



220 tonnes of CO₂ saved

The amount we saved on London outbound flights alone in a year, equivalent in energy to the electricity required to power more than 37 homes for a year



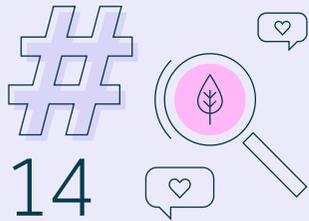
Raising awareness

For the United Nations' World Environment Day on 5 June 2019, staff across our UK offices were pitted against one another in an Extreme Tea Challenge. This head-to-head cycling event saw teams compete to top the leaderboard in a race to generate the equivalent amount of human energy required to boil a cup of water.

For our 2020 World Environment Day activity, we ran a photo competition and children's art competition based on the global platform's theme of biodiversity: Time for Nature.



Our impact in London: In 10 numbers



14

of the UK's top 50 firms "have a grip on the sustainability issue", according to *The Lawyer magazine*—we are one of them

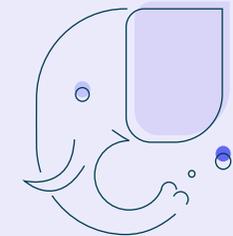
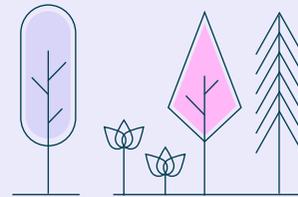
220,000 cups

plastic/paper cups were saved by introducing keep cups/bottles to staff



20x

The average number of times that our stationery supplier's Greenboxes have been reused

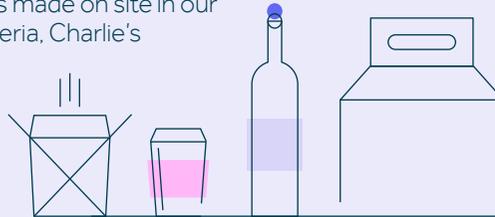


7 tonnes

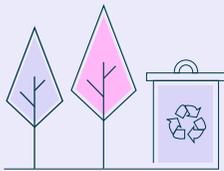
of paper were saved—the weight of an adult male elephant

100%

compostable vegware is used to serve food products made on site in our London cafeteria, Charlie's



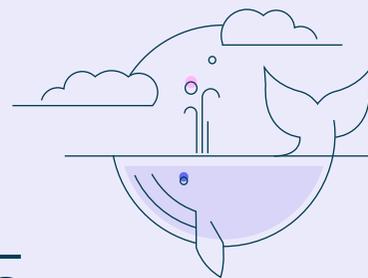
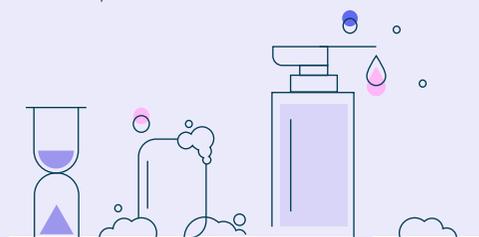
0



waste from 5 and 10 Fleet Place was sent to landfill

140 hours

of employment were created for people with disabilities by switching to The Soap.co in our client washrooms

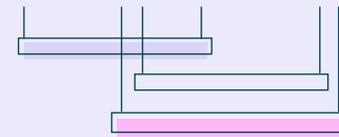


115 tonnes

of recyclable waste were collected from our London office—the weight of a blue whale

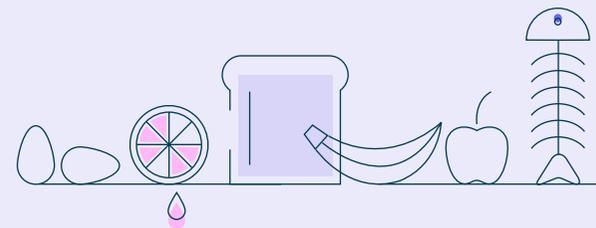
15,000 sq ft

was refurbished and replaced with LED lighting



17 tonnes

of food waste were recycled at our London office, producing enough energy to power the ground floor of 5 Fleet Place for two weeks



Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

As part of our pledge to become a truly sustainable business, we partnered with the Carbon Trust to independently and vigorously verify our carbon emissions, waste and water usage, and help us move towards a sustainable, low carbon future.

Recent 3R initiatives—Reduce, Reuse, Recycle—in our UK offices include the introduction of reusable water bottles and thermal keep cups, removing all single use plastic cutlery in the London office cafeteria and plasticised paper cups at tea points, and recycling all of our client area coffee grounds into advanced biofuels and biochemicals. Our responsible waste management efforts earned us the 2019 Platinum Award in the City of London's Clean City Awards.

Source: Charles Russell Speechlys



A time for natural realignment

Pen Hadow's world may seem far removed from commercial law but the renowned polar explorer and conservationist is no stranger to our community. Pen officially launched the **Legal Sector Alliance** (which would later become the Legal Sustainability Alliance) alongside HRH The Prince of Wales in December 2008, and his call for a "Manhattan Project" to combat climate change at London Climate Action Week 2019 was a catalyst for the creation of **The Chancery Lane Project**.

As leader of the **90°North Unit**, which researches the impact of global warming on the Arctic ecosystem, Pen has witnessed the catastrophic effects of sea-ice loss and habitat loss first hand. In Spring 2019, he gave a series of informative and educational talks to our staff and clients, and invited us to consider how we, as individuals and as a business, can make a difference. A year on and in the midst of COVID-19, which some have suggested could present an opportunity to press the reset button and put the health of the planet at the heart of our global economies, his call for action is even stronger.

"Law firms have the opportunity and, indeed, a duty of care to catalyse change," he says. "Not doing so is just as bad as a coal company wantonly belching out fumes. It isn't business-prudent to delay clamping down on carbon emissions and environmental impacts. There is competitive advantage in getting on with it now, not least because there is a heightened consciousness and limited brand clutter in this field at the moment."

"Law firms have the opportunity and, indeed, a duty of care to catalyse change"

PEN HADOW, FOUNDER OF 90°NORTH UNIT

According to Pen, firms in all sectors have had the opportunity to strategise about sustainability and the environment in a way that wasn't possible pre-COVID-19. "Perhaps the most precious outcome from this will be our realignment with the natural world," he suggests. "People have slowed down, and have had time to reflect and get a more objective perspective on their individual, household and organisation's actions and behaviours."

"If lawyers choose to deploy their intellect on these environment-led issues, it will shift the dial for major scale behavioural change"

PEN HADOW, FOUNDER OF 90°NORTH UNIT

Cutting emissions

Air travel is an area that both businesses and individuals have been forced to reflect on. Here, "I would like businesses to be thinking and working on the basis of minimising air travel," he says. "While the legal trade may not be a major contributor in percentage terms worldwide on carbon emissions through air travel, every single person at every single organisation needs to be chiselling away and clamping down ever tighter on ways to cut these emissions."

Image: Pen Hadow's Arctic Mission expedition in 2017—the first sailing vessels in history to enter the Arctic Ocean's international waters without icebreakers, moored to an ice flow. Courtesy of 90North Unit



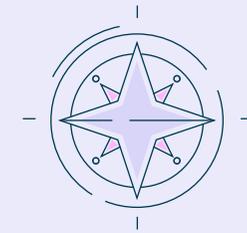
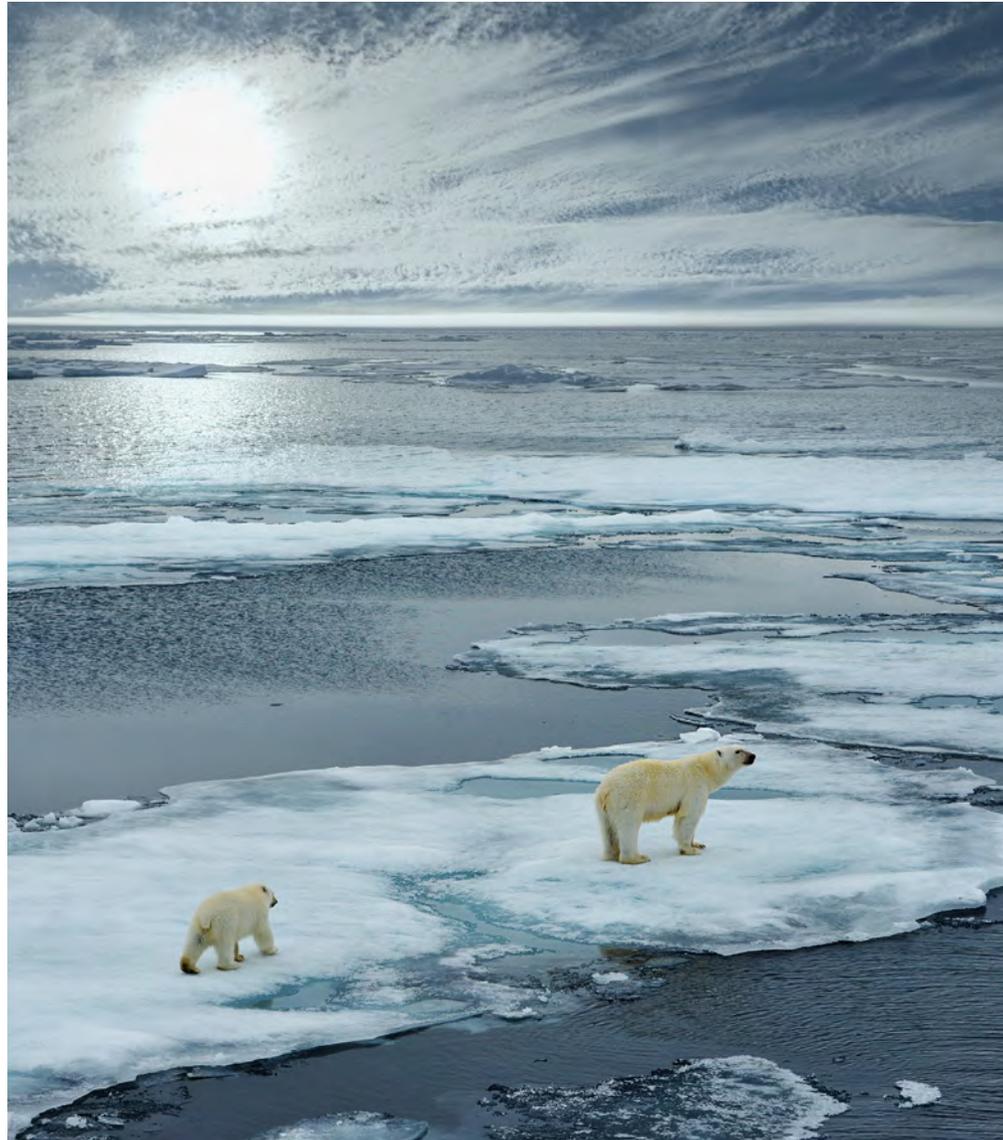


A time for natural realignment_{continued}

Shifting the dial

The legal profession has a particularly important role to play due to its potential influence on those in the highest echelons of business, he adds. "What the legal sector says and what it does has more traction and amplification potential than a lot of other individuals and organisations. If lawyers choose to deploy their intellect on these environment-led issues, it will shift the dial for major scale behavioural change. Equally, non-deployment is tantamount to wilful neglect."

Images: Below: Pen Hadow, Founder of the 90°North Unit, and the only person to have trekked solo and unsupported from Canada to the North Pole. Right: Polar bear sow and cub walk on ice floe in Norwegian Arctic waters



Protecting global biodiversity

The 90°North Unit is seeking to establish the world's largest wildlife reserve for the North Pole's international waters to protect global biodiversity and the life-support systems upon which we all depend. To build the scientific case for the reserve—which would span nearly 3 million square kilometres—it has partnered with the University of Exeter, which is offering £750,000 of funding towards a new £2.25m research unit to be focused exclusively on the Central Arctic Ocean.

Public support for the reserve will be activated through annual voyages of exploration by sailing vessel to the Arctic Ocean, and to catalyse interest, influence and decision making by the international policy-making community, the 90°North Unit stages photographic exhibitions, film showings, conference speeches, and hosted events.

To support Pen Hadow's conservation work or find out more about the 90°North Unit, contact: +44 (0)7970 619 161 or email pen@penhadow.com or visit www.penhadow.com and www.90northunit.org

Our social impact

Helping our communities thrive through Pro Bono work and community investment

[Read on to find out more >](#)



Helping to level the playing field

The events of recent months have made it abundantly clear that business and society are deeply intertwined. A business depends for sustainable success on the health and resilience of the society within which it operates. Society can only develop equitably and sustainably with good business at its heart.



Christopher Page
Senior Partner

Supporting the communities—local and global—in which we work and helping them to flourish, is not just part of our responsibility as a good corporate citizen: it is also key to our own success and sustainability.

As a Firm, we provide support for our communities through our Social Impact Programme. This is made up of a strong Pro Bono practice, and a high impact Community Investment Programme, with fundraising and volunteering activities.

It is right that as a firm of lawyers we provide much of this support by using our technical and professional skills. We deploy those skills to help disadvantaged people obtain better access to justice and to help strengthen non-profit organisations that provide such vital services. In 2019, we made a commitment significantly to expand our Pro Bono practice, making it part of our core business and supporting all our lawyers to get involved, at all levels of seniority and whatever their areas of expertise.

Through our diverse Community Investment initiatives we mobilise creative, and committed members of the Firm to raise and give much needed funds for charities and to volunteer their time and talents.

“In 2019, we made a commitment significantly to expand our Pro Bono practice, making it part of our core business and supporting all our lawyers to get involved”

In order to maximise this support, we work in partnership with frontline legal advice centres (on which a great deal of Pro Bono work depends for its efficacy and impact), with our long standing community partners, with new partners such as the Social Business Trust and with our clients. Our aim is to make a full and fair contribution to society by sharing our skills and time. We know we can never do enough, but we are immensely proud of this work, and share with you here just a few of many examples of our social impact during 2019/20.

£135,000

Raised for Blesma, our 2019/20 Charity of the Year

£1,000,000

Value of Pro Bono legal advice given from July 2019–July 2020



Challenging unfair disability benefit decisions

The Welfare Reform Act of 2012 ushered in significant changes to the benefits system and cuts for the most vulnerable people in society with severe medical conditions and disabilities. Recognising this, we joined forces with frontline anti-poverty organisation **Zacchaeus 2000 Trust (Z2K)** to provide free representation to its clients and help them to appeal negative decisions about their disability benefits at the First-tier Tribunal.

Our lawyers Aurelia Lee and Nick Bass (led by Partner Andrew Keeley), and Celine Jones and Harry Bulbrook (led by Legal Director Sharon Higgs), successfully challenged the unfair withdrawal of disability benefits from Z2K clients by the Department for Work and Pensions just a few months into the partnership, helping to restore vital support for two very vulnerable individuals.

“Our client couldn’t take more than three or four steps without being in absolute agony and having to grab the railings or her friend,” says Aurelia, an Associate in our Construction, Engineering & Projects practice, recounting their first meeting. “Knowing an assessor had met her and deemed she was more than capable of moving around on her own was shocking. But seeing how happy and relieved she was at the end of the Tribunal hearing was just elating.”

“When benefit claimants receive a brown envelope through their post box they say they get a sinking feeling. But their client will reach pension age before this award expires, so she’ll never have to feel that again”

LUCY ISAAC, TRIBUNALS COORDINATOR, Z2K

Changing lives

Aurelia, Nick and Andrew secured a ten-year award for their client. “Each year I see two or three of these awards at most out of the hundreds of clients we support,” notes Z2K Tribunals Coordinator Lucy Isaac. “When benefit claimants receive a brown envelope through their post box they say they get a sinking feeling. But their client will reach pension age before this award expires, so she’ll never have to feel that again. This result is unlikely to have ever happened without the help of her three representatives.”

As well as giving back to society, the cases with Z2K also provide our lawyers with valuable advocacy experience, which can directly benefit their day jobs, says Andrew Keeley, a Partner in our Construction, Engineering & Projects team. “It’s great to be part of a firm that doesn’t pay lip service to these worthwhile initiatives, but genuinely supports them,” he adds.

Image: Charles Russell Speechlys works with Z2K clients to appeal their negative disability benefits decisions at the First-tier Tribunal



Assisting asylum seekers in Greece

Around 121,000 people are seeking asylum in Greece, the vast majority Syrians, Afghans, and Iraqis fleeing the devastation of permanent conflict. Many are living in inhumane conditions in camps on the islands of Lesbos and Samos where movement restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic and severe overcrowding have made their already fragile situation, untenable.

"All of the 21,000 asylum seekers on Lesbos are going through a legal procedure," says Philip Worthington, Managing Director at **European Lawyers in Lesbos (ELIL)**, a frontline non-profit providing vital legal support to asylum seekers on Lesbos and working to extend its programme to Samos.

In November 2019, we joined a unique Pro Bono collaboration with five other firms (Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe, White & Case, Dentons, Allen & Overy and Ashurst) to support asylum seekers in Lesbos. Together we are training and fielding volunteer lawyers for two-week secondments with ELIL, supporting the ELIL team to prepare more people in the camps of Moria and Kara Tepe for

their asylum interviews, and assist refugees with applications to join their family members in other EU Member states.

"There are only about 20 lawyers on Lesbos providing assistance, so that's more than 1,000 people per lawyer, which means in reality, the majority of people don't have access to legal aid," says Philip. "That's why the partnership with Charles Russell Speechlys and other firms is so critical. The more lawyers that we have in the team and the more volunteers we work with, the more people we can assist. It is as simple as that."

Adding value

Rose Carey, Partner and Head of our Immigration team, spent two weeks on Pro Bono secondment with ELIL in Lesbos in November 2019. "You do feel that you can make a difference to people while you are there," she says. "I was reminded of how important it is that we, as a firm, are involved in a project like this to help people who are so desperate that they put everything on the line to try and get to a safe place. Many of the refugees in those camps will go onto other countries or they'll stay in Greece, and they will contribute to society."

Our next cohort of Pro Bono lawyers was set to travel to Lesbos and Samos from April 2020



21,000

The number of asylum seekers on Lesbos who are going through the legal procedure



Assisting asylum seekers in Greece continued

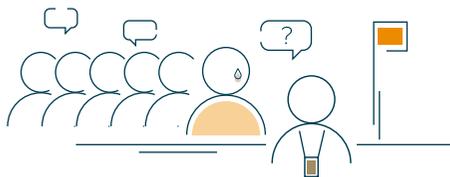
but due to COVID-19 travel disruption, we are working with ELIL to provide legal support remotely.

Making an impact

Since the Pro Bono collaboration with Charles Russell Speechlys and the other law firms started, ELIL has assisted more than 2,000 people through one-on-one consultations, group legal information sessions and daily Q&A drop in sessions. Overall, since ELIL was founded in July 2016, it has assisted over 11,000 people.



Images: ELIL staff and volunteers on the ground in Lesvos, Courtesy of ELIL



11,000

The number of people ELIL has assisted since it was founded in 2016





Scaling up social impact

Social Business Trust (SBT) seeks out innovative charities and social enterprises in the UK, and helps them scale up their reach and impact. We teamed up with SBT in July 2019 to provide Pro Bono legal assistance and professional skills to help organisations in the SBT portfolio get to the next step in their growth journey.

Highlights over the past year include work for Twining Enterprise, a social enterprise and charity that helps people living with mental health challenges to access and thrive in the workplace. In October 2019, our Associate Josie MacLeod and Trainee Solicitor Grace Mathieson received an award from SBT for their Pro Bono work with Twining to update and improve its Employee Handbook policies.

Emergency response

When COVID-19 took hold in March 2020, we joined forces with SBT and eight of its corporate partners to form SBT Rainbow to fast track assistance to charities and social enterprises most in need. Collectively, the taskforce

channelled £51,000 to the SBT portfolio to fund emergency personal protective equipment supplies. Our Consultant Mike Scott also led a webinar for CEOs and Chairs on Board Leadership in Crisis and provided direct legal advice to those renegotiating contracts.

"In those early stages in March, we were meeting on Zoom every evening to hear what was happening with the organisations that we support and what needs they had," explains Social Business Trust CEO Adele Blakebrough MBE. "Normally we have quarterly investment meetings and the way we work is very measured, but this was an emergency response and Charles Russell Speechlys and our other partners helped accelerate our impact."

"In those early stages in March, we were meeting on Zoom every evening to hear what was happening with the organisations that we support and what needs they had"

ADELE BLAKEBROUGH MBE, CEO, SOCIAL BUSINESS TRUST

Between the end of March and May, SBT Rainbow volunteers worked 115 hours per week Pro Bono on average, and sourced and delivered more than 150,000 items of personal protective equipment.

Image: London Early Years Foundation, one of SBT's investee charities and social enterprises



£51,000

The amount the SBT Rainbow taskforce channelled to the SBT portfolio to fund emergency personal protective equipment supplies

Refettorio Felix: A better food future

Before COVID-19 hit, London charity **Refettorio Felix** was serving three-course lunches made from surplus food to about 80 vulnerable members of the local community each day at St Cuthbert's Centre in Earl's Court. As the number of infections rose, it switched almost overnight to a takeaway service and now dishes out about 120 meals daily, and delivers a further 400 to people in need in neighbouring boroughs and across the capital.

Central to its mission is its plant-based compostable vegware packaging—which it has managed to continue using throughout the COVID-19 crisis despite the increased volumes and inevitable cost challenges.

Following a referral from Social Business Trust (SBT) in 2019, we provided Pro Bono legal advice to Refettorio Felix to help it establish proper terms and conditions in order to licence its premises as an event space to third parties.

Pro Bono partnership

We are continuing to advise the charity on a change of name and new articles of association, and as part of the SBT Rainbow taskforce, were able to provide it with essential personal protective equipment, helping it to continue operating during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We were matched up very quickly to Charles Russell Speechlys by SBT and the partnership has been so worthwhile," says CEO Alistair Kingsley. "Lots of services similar to ours closed down in lockdown, so we've had a lot more attention from the media. Having clarity around our name has helped."

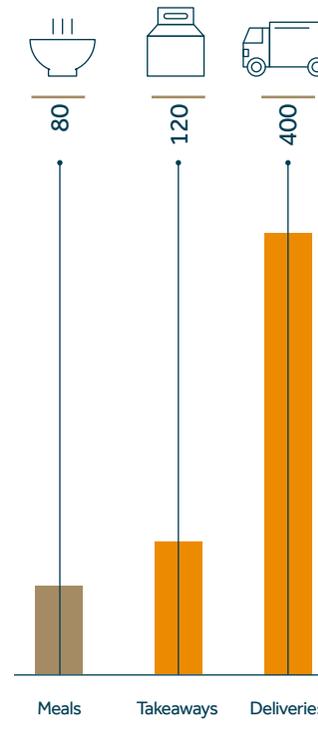
"We were matched up very quickly to Charles Russell Speechlys by SBT and the partnership has been so worthwhile"

ALISTAIR KINGSLEY, CEO, REFETTORIO FELIX

"Sometimes offers of Pro Bono help are not worth the hassle; you're put to the bottom of the pile because there is paid work to service and your issue gets stuck. But we have had genuine support from the Charles Russell Speechlys team and their response has been incredibly professional and efficient."

How COVID-19 has impacted the output at Refettorio Felix

- Pre-COVID-19
- During COVID-19



Images: Top: Lunches made from surplus food; Bottom: Chef Massimo Bottura, who established Refettorio Felix, Courtesy of the Refettorio Felix team

Helping injured servicemen and women

In 2019, our staff voted to support **Blesma** as our charity of the year. Founded in the aftermath of the First World War, Blesma, the national armed forces charity, supports serving and ex-servicemen and women who have suffered life-changing injury or loss of a limb and sight, speech or hearing loss during duty. Their work helps them rebuild their lives through rehabilitation and welfare support.

Our 2019 events with Blesma included an 'Omnathlon', which saw more than 90 members of staff across our offices cover the entire length of the River Thames (180 miles) in a weekend through walking, cycling, swimming and kayaking.

We also held a Trainee and Solicitors Apprentice challenge to build a wheelchair (with two later donated to elderly members of the Blackfriars Settlement) and a Christmas fundraising push, which included a gift wrapping service and giant gingerbread house auction. The activities raised more than £135,000 for the charity — its largest corporate donation to date.

"Staff have become personal supporters of Blesma, so it's not just a partnership, there is a legacy that will last for years"

MIKE ALLEN, CORPORATE PARTNERSHIPS
MANAGER, BLESMA

"The engagement with Charles Russell Speechlys has been exceptional," says Corporate Partnerships Manager Mike Allen. "From the outset, they have listened to the needs of the charity and our members, and how they can help us make an impact. Their staff have become personal supporters of Blesma, so it's not just a partnership, there is a legacy that will last for years."

90 staff

took part in the 'Omnathlon' over one weekend



2 wheelchairs

were also donated to the elderly



£135,000

The amount raised for the charity during 2019



Images: CRS staff fundraising for Blesma: Omnathlon and Trainee Wheelchair Challenge



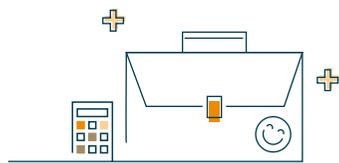
Improving social mobility through collaboration

“There is no silver bullet to social mobility as an issue,” says Barry Matthews, Founder of the **Social Mobility Business Partnership (SMBP)**. “But there are a number of things that you can do to help an individual from a low-income background get in the shop window.”

For SMBP, this involves facilitating interactive and immersive work experience, skills-based activities and ongoing coaching. The charity works with more than 130 commercial organisations, professional services firms and professional sports teams across 14 towns and cities to help Year 12 students from low-income backgrounds in their pursuit of a career in business. We joined forces with SMBP in 2015 as a founding partner and head up one of its London clusters.

Nurturing talent

Students undertake a week of work experience in our London office through our own talent pipeline programme, Career Start, followed by the SMBP Work Insight and Skills week with some of our



180+ pupils

discovered a variety of occupations and roles during our Work Week 2019 programme with St Alban's CE Primary School

commercial partners such as Aviva, Barclays and Coca Cola. They also spend a day at a professional sports club where they learn about the psychology of resilience and goal achievement models. “No one organisation can tackle social mobility on their own,” says Barry. “It's only through collaboration that you can have true impact.”

“No one organisation can tackle social mobility on their own. It's only through collaboration that you can have true impact”

BARRY MATTHEWS, FOUNDER OF THE SOCIAL MOBILITY BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP

Our Career Start Talent Pipeline draws 24 students annually from state schools where there is little or no corporate support. In two programmes split across the year, students take part in various skills-based workshops, training, networking and information sessions during a five-year programme until they graduate. The product of a collaboration between our Social Impact Team (Community Investment), Diversity & Inclusion and HR teams, it aims to help students navigate the different milestones in their studies and career planning, as well as strengthen our own talent pool.

“I've particularly enjoyed being involved in the firm's mentoring programme as I know through personal

experience how hard it is for those from non-traditional backgrounds to gain opportunities to work in city law,” says Jason Saiban, a Partner in our Commercial team, on his motivation to volunteer. “We are hugely privileged and well-rewarded in our profession. Giving back a little time, energy and commitment is the absolute minimum we should all do.”

Educational support

At Charles Russell Speechlys, we believe collaborations need to start early and that supporting young children and families can help unlock future talent and opportunity.

Our ongoing school reading programme with St Alban's CE Primary School in Holborn pairs volunteers with children from Year 2 (aged 6–7) through to Year 5 (aged 9–10) to develop their confidence, communication and personal skills, and provide them with strong adult role models. Our 2019 Work Week programme with the school included a 'Dragons' Den' with Year 6 and helped more than 180 pupils discover a variety of occupations and roles as well as challenge career stereotypes around ethnic background and gender.

Images: Career Start Programme





Strengthening community partnership and volunteering

With community organisations forced to suspend their services and close their doors during the COVID-19 pandemic, we have found new ways to continue supporting the most isolated and vulnerable in society through our charity partners and other local initiatives. To strengthen this collective effort, we upped the number of volunteering hours available to our staff from 14 hours to 21 hours per year.

Volunteers from our London office support the work of **Blackfriars Settlement** charity, through its Positive Ageing group and The Crusoe Club, a group for the blind and visually impaired.

"At first it felt like simply lending a pair of hands to ensure the members could enjoy days out, social occasions, and Christmas lunches, but it soon becomes much more," says Caroline Greenwell, a Senior Associate in our Litigation & Dispute Resolution practice, who has volunteered with The Crusoe Club for a number of years. "My days with the members have been some of the most rewarding times I have spent at the firm."

Strong bonds have also been formed on both sides as a result of the partnership. "The volunteers I get from Charles Russell Speechlys are more than volunteers to me — they're friends," says Tina Johnston, Coordinator for Positive Ageing Services at Blackfriars Settlement, pointing to their continued support during COVID-19. "They are phoning Crusoe members and really cheering them up."

Activities include 'Life Matters' drop in-presentations on varied legal topics delivered by our trainees, an annual Halloween quiz night, Christmas lunch at our London office (including a

visit from Santa), cooking and preparing Christmas lunches at the Settlement, and day trips out.

"The volunteers I get from Charles Russell Speechlys are more than volunteers to me—they're friends"

TINA JOHNSTON, COORDINATOR FOR POSITIVE AGEING SERVICES AT BLACKFRIARS SETTLEMENT

Combating loneliness

The Churn is a community-based project that seeks to combat social isolation and improve wellbeing in Cirencester and neighbouring villages. It supports more than 1,900 people each year from antenatal services to end-of-life care, helping those seeking work, vulnerable families and older people.

For the last three years, volunteers from our Cheltenham office have hosted an annual afternoon tea on behalf of The Churn Project for elderly members in the community. "It makes a real difference to the older people that attend," says Older People Services Manager, Liz Folkes. "It's nice for them to engage with different, working people, a world that is no longer part of their everyday life."

Our volunteers have also supported **Churn Good Neighbours**, the charity's befriending



21 hours

of paid volunteering are made available to our staff annually

Images: Top: Blackfriars Crusoe Club Christmas; Bottom: The Churn afternoon tea



Strengthening community partnership and volunteering continued

service, visiting older people living alone in the area. Through the COVID-19 crisis, they have provided ongoing support via a telephone befriending service.

Establishing a community fund

Back in 2016, our Guildford office pledged £5,000 to set up the Charles Russell Speechlys Community Fund in conjunction with the Community Foundation for Surrey (CFS), to help fund a range of different charities and projects in the South East. In the years since, that fund has grown, and a further £11,000 was made available for grants in 2019/20, focused on employment, training and skills initiatives in and around the Guildford area. As well as financial assistance, our Guildford team engages with the projects through volunteering, Pro Bono legal advice and other professional support.

“It’s a bit of a snowball effect—the more we do, talk, and get involved with organisations, the bigger these relationships become and the more value we can add”

RICHARD HONEY, PRIVATE CLIENT TEAM ASSOCIATE,
CHARLES RUSSELL SPEECHLYS



£11,000

The amount the Charles Russell Speechlys Community Fund gave in grants to charities and projects in 2019/20

Getting involved

One of our grant recipients in 2019 was **Surrey SATRO**, an educational charity, which engages young people in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths. We funded one of its projects teaching construction skills to young people with special educational needs or disabilities.

“It’s amazing to see the impact of this fund, not just on the charities, but on the way our firm interacts with them,” says Richard Honey, an Associate in our Private Client team, who helps run the investment panel for grants. “It’s a bit of a snowball effect—the more we do, talk, and get involved

with organisations, the bigger these relationships become and the more value we can add.”

Making connections

We look for opportunities to increase the impact of our Community Fund donations through Pro Bono work. Ingrid Saffin, a Partner in our Real Estate team, negotiated a new lease to help youth charity and Community Fund grant recipient **Matrix Trust** develop part of its offices at Allen House Pavilion—a former bowling green—into a social enterprise and youth café. The space will serve young people after school and the wider community by day. Pei Li Kew, an Associate in our Corporate team also assisted Matrix Trust Pro Bono to establish its new social enterprise venture as a Community Interest Company.

“Charles Russell Speechlys has always sought to make extra connections with the groups that they fund, above and beyond giving them a grant,” says Kate Peters, Director of Grant-making at CFS. “Organisations like Matrix Trust are a terrific resource for the community in normal times and will be even more important as we emerge from COVID-19.”

Images: Top: Skillway; Bottom: Step by Step



Our clients

Catalysing change through responsible business practice

[Read on to find out more >](#)



Helping our clients navigate a rapidly evolving landscape

Responsible business is, in essence, about corporate purpose. For what—and in whose interests—should a business operate? The broad, modern consensus is that a responsible business thinks beyond the short-term interests of its owners. It understands that its licence to operate, its sustainability and long-term success depend on the health and resilience of its staff, of society and of the natural environment and that it must therefore generate value for this broader stakeholder group in order to thrive.



Kerry Stares
Director of Responsible Business & Pro Bono

Historically, doing business responsibly was framed as an ethical and moral imperative. While doing the right thing plainly drives many businesses, the landscape of environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues has evolved significantly and rapidly in recent years. Businesses must now navigate a complex framework of ESG standards and regulations, be prepared to face increased scrutiny of their business practices by investors and a more informed public and adapt to emerging ESG risks – physical, regulatory and reputational. Put simply, responsible business practices are now key to financial performance and sustainability.

“All indications are, however, that responsible business practice will be more, not less important in the months and years to come”

Economic survival and a return to growth will no doubt be a universal priority following the COVID-19 pandemic. All indications are, however, that responsible business practice will be more, not less important in the months and years to come, as policymakers accelerate efforts to decarbonise economies and investors scrutinise corporate governance with a focus on preparedness for future systemic crises, including the effects of climate change.

We also expect to see enhanced expectations of businesses as social actors as the COVID-19 crisis continues to fuel an energetic debate about which are ‘essential’ businesses and ‘contributors’ to society and which are not.

As a firm we work with listed and privately owned businesses, investors, trusts and estates, individuals, families, charities and social enterprises, regulators and public bodies – helping them to navigate this rapidly evolving landscape, to think long term, to look beyond compliance to purpose and values and to advance on their own sustainability journey. I am pleased to share with you here a few recent examples of our work and thought leadership in this area.

Governance and integrity

Our Integrity Services Unit (ISU) launched in 2018, focused on advising key stakeholders in the sports industry on good governance issues such as anti-corruption, anti-discrimination, reputation management and safeguarding. Clients include regulatory bodies, leading sports clubs, associations and brands.

Having expert insight in this space is key, according to our client, the International Tennis Federation, "given both the prevalence and complexity of integrity issues facing sporting organisations these days." But these challenges stretch well beyond the playing field; they have climbed to the top of the corporate agenda in other sectors and are core issues of risk and responsibility for a multitude of organisations.

"With social platforms and 24/7 media, the importance of reputation and brand management has extended to virtually every sector of business"

DARREN BAILEY, CONSULTANT AND HEAD OF THE INTEGRITY SERVICES UNIT, CHARLES RUSSELL SPEECHLYS

"Sport has traditionally been at the vanguard of tackling integrity issues, borne out of the perception of Corinthian values, fair play and doing the right thing," says Charles Russell Speechlys Consultant Darren Bailey, who set up and leads the multi-disciplinary ISU, and established an Integrity Unit for the Football Association in 2016 during his time with the governing body. "With social platforms and 24/7 media, the importance of reputation and brand management has extended to virtually every sector of business. Genuine integrity however, goes way beyond reputation

management issues. In order to make a positive contribution to society it is critical that ethics, values and social justice are at the heart of an organisation's thinking, culture and practices. Inclusivity, transparency and accountability have never been more important for strong corporate performance, as COVID-19 and the global spotlight on structural racism have clearly demonstrated."

Inculcating integrity

The investigatory and advisory work of the ISU falls under two distinct offerings: a rapid crisis response and a strategic and pre-emptive approach to identify and mitigate risks to integrity and encourage more responsible business practices. With both, the human dimension and culture of an organisation are fundamental, says Darren. "We're trying to evolve integrity and governance into something behavioural rather than just creating legal documentation. You can have rules and regulations, codes and protocols, but if you don't have the right culture, good governance dissipates completely."

The reputational and financial fallout from major breaches of integrity should not be understated either, he says, particularly in an environment where revenues are already under strain.

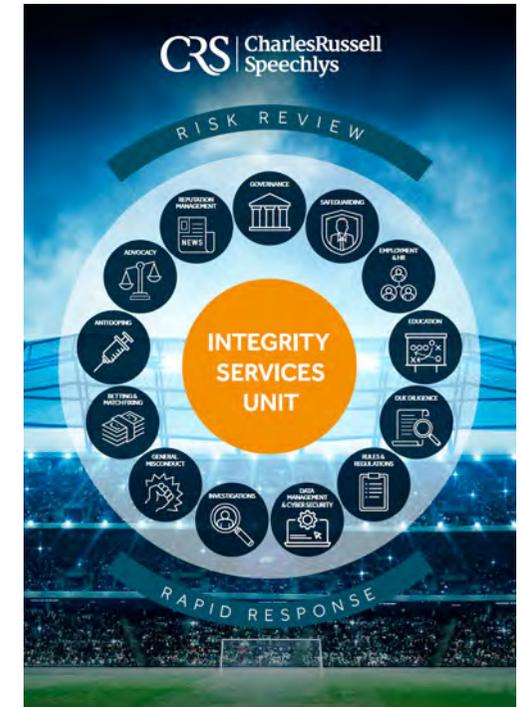
"In the current climate, there will be revenue and government funding shortages, so it is crucial to set up your governance, decision making and culture in the right way to attract investment. The same rules apply, whether you are a charity, corporate or sporting body.

"You can have rules and regulations, codes and protocols, but if you don't have the right culture, good governance dissipates completely"

DARREN BAILEY, CONSULTANT AND HEAD OF THE INTEGRITY SERVICES UNIT, CHARLES RUSSELL SPEECHLYS

"But this is not something you should have to be dragged into, kicking and screaming," he cautions. "If you want to remain relevant, effective and successful, to appeal to a diverse and increasingly demanding customer base, and to hold up to more media scrutiny, it is the right thing to do."

Image: The Integrity Services Unit advises key stakeholders in the sports industry on good governance issues



Protecting human rights in the corporate supply chain

As one of London's Great Estates, **The Howard de Walden Estate** is acutely aware of its moral responsibility to the community it serves.

This commitment to the environment and local community is at the heart of Howard de Walden's efforts to identify and mitigate the risks of modern slavery in its supply chain and business operations, according to Ian Sands, Howard de Walden's Enfranchisement Director.

Working with Partner Paul Henty, Howard de Walden designed and implemented a due diligence framework to help identify and counter key modern slavery risks in areas of its supply chain, such as those related to construction and its annual social events. Questionnaires underpin its due diligence and form a key part of the information gathering process, both for existing contractors and new suppliers.

"We have gone the extra mile because we can and we feel it is the right thing to do"

IAN SANDS, ENFRANCHISEMENT DIRECTOR,
THE HOWARD DE WALDEN ESTATE

Howard de Walden has also widened the scope of its due diligence beyond compliance with the Modern Slavery Act 2015 to include domestic servitude risks to those living and working on the Estate. Ian explains: "We have gone the extra mile because we can and we feel it is the right thing to do."

Core risk and responsibility

As recent allegations of poor working practices in some of Leicester's clothing factories highlight, modern slavery is an increasingly important issue of business risk and responsibility for companies. Indeed, "the power of the charity sector, human rights organisations and commentators on social media can cause more pain for a business not doing the right thing in this area than any fine", says Ian.

According to Paul Henty, the scale of modern slavery underscores why it is so critical for companies to get a grip on their supply chain and weed out unscrupulous practices. "It might look different or be harder to spot, but slavery is still with us," he says. "From the start, Howard de Walden recognised that this was something of real importance to the organisation and it is working hard to apply best practice."

According to anti-slavery charity and our pro bono client, **Justice and Care**, there are at least 100,000 victims of modern slavery in Britain—ten times the official estimate and more than the UK's prison population.

"We've got to do so much more to convict traffickers and hold businesses accountable

on their supply chains," says Justice and Care CEO Christian Guy, pointing to figures from the charity's report, *It Still Happens Here*, published in collaboration with The Centre for Social Justice in July 2020. The figures show that the number of modern slavery victims identified and referred to the National Referral Mechanism increased by over 100% to more than 7,500 between 2016 and 2019—yet only 219 traffickers were convicted for slavery-related offences last year.

"The court of public opinion is going to be a key way that we move companies on from a compliance mind-set to great business practice," he says. "Charities like ours can play a very helpful role but we can't arrest people and sort out employment practices, so we've got to get businesses and government firing."

Legal advisers play an important role in helping companies double down on the issue, he adds. "It's vital that firms like Charles Russell Speechlys are engaged. These are complicated issues and the best companies responding take legal advice not only on what they need to do to stay within the law, but also on what good practice looks like."

Images: The Howard de Walden Estate is working to mitigate the risks of modern slavery in business areas including its annual events





Good business is sustainable business

Our collaboration with in-house lawyers, barristers and lawyers at other firms through **The Chancery Lane Project (TCLP)** is helping to develop cutting-edge climate-conscious commercial contract provisions and model laws that will drive sustainable behaviour in business and communities. TCLP's Climate Contract Playbook and Green Papers of Model Laws, originally launched in February 2020 with the former now in its second edition, are a product of this collective effort and are designed to help lawyers around the world fight climate change.

Images: The Chancery Lane Project's climate Hackathon, November 2019

More than 100 firms have committed pro-bono time to the initiative, which was set up in 2019 by Matt Gingell, General Counsel at investment firm Oxygen House Group. At the time of writing, the Climate Contract Playbook had been downloaded over 10,000 times across 60 jurisdictions since its publication, highlighting the growing interest in clauses that address the climate impact of contracts and agreements.

impact of their client's operations makes business sense. They recognise that it's not enough just to improve the recycling in their offices; that they can do things differently by bringing climate change and environmental concerns into their thinking when they advise clients and in their drafting."

"Firms recognise that it's not enough just to improve the recycling in their offices; that they can do things differently by bringing climate change and environmental concerns into their thinking when they advise clients"

BECKY CLISSMANN, SENIOR EDITOR IN THE ENVIRONMENT TEAM AT PRACTICAL LAW

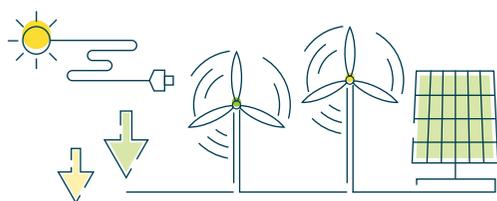
"We've tapped into something in the zeitgeist," says Becky Clissmann, Senior Editor in the Environment Team at Practical Law, which hosted TCLP's climate Hackathon in November 2019 that culminated in the two publications. "Partners are now alive to the fact that addressing the climate



A new market standard

In a COVID-19 world where threats and opportunities preside, there are very clear realms of environmental engagement which are just starting to surface around land use, greenhouse gases and zoonotic diseases, adds Ben Metz, Project Lead at TCLP. "Each of these are material considerations for every law firm and their client base," he says. "The law firms that grab this are going to thrive. Those that don't are going to be the firms that wither on the vine."

Drafting is the first step; the next is integrating these new clauses from the Playbook into the



10,000 downloads

The number of times the Climate Contract Playbook has been downloaded



Good business is sustainable business continued

Images: The Nuw app is available to download on the App Store and Google Play

precedents of the relevant practice areas and lobbying for legislative changes based on the model laws. Having contributed to both TCLP's Hackathon and the initial drafting of the Climate Contract Playbook, our firm, which is keen to be one of the early adopters, is using these clauses in our own procurement contracts and encouraging them to be shared with clients for consideration.

Ingrid Saffin, Partner in our Real Estate practice and a member of the Sustainability and Community Engagement committee for Revo, the non-profit professional body representing the retail property sector, believes that the current disruption in the landlord and tenant world precipitated by COVID-19 also paves the way for more sustainable clauses in documentation. "The shape of leases is going to change faster now than it has done before and lawyers are going to be looking at lots of innovative and creative drafting, so it's an important time for us to push this forward and make a real difference," she says.

"Our commercial clients are increasingly aware of environmental risk and supportive of measures to counter it, and one of the ways they can do that is to occupy their premises on the basis of sustainable principles," she adds. "As part of my work with Revo, we're looking at ways to support

and guide the industry towards achieving the best sustainable credentials possible."

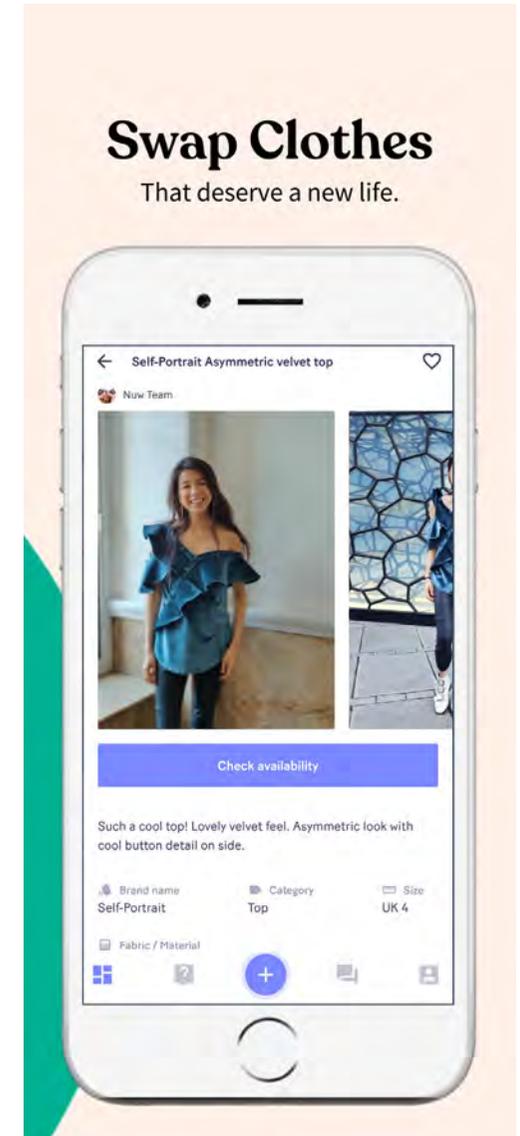
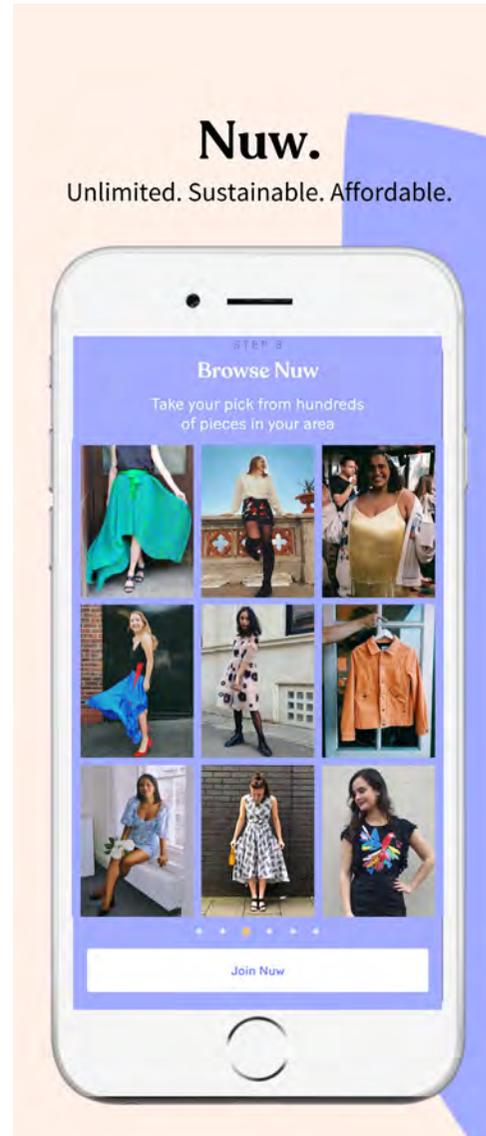
Conscious consumerism

Through our Pro Bono practice, we are working with Nuw, an innovative tech for good enterprise and app for peer-to-peer clothes sharing designed to mitigate the high environmental and human cost of fast fashion.

Members pay a monthly fee and upload a garment of their own in order to gain unlimited access to the network. From there, they can share much loved but rarely worn outfits with other members of their local community, extending the lifecycle of the items while helping to minimise their own environmental footprint.

Adapting to life under COVID-19, Nuw has added a permanent swap feature for members who want to hold onto items for longer, and has teamed up with UPS and Parcel Motel to offer a parcel locker system for convenient pick-ups and drop offs, allowing the company to extend its distribution across the UK and Ireland.

CEO Aisling Byrne founded the business in 2015 with her friend Alison Kelly, after witnessing the impact of the fast fashion industry first hand





Good business is sustainable business continued

during a trip to India two years earlier. "It was the year of the Rana Plaza disaster in Bangladesh and we had become very interested and conflicted about our fashion choices," she explains. "Sustainability just wasn't accessible to our age group, even though we felt we had as much ability to make a difference as anyone else."

"Sustainability just wasn't accessible to our age group, even though we felt we had as much ability to make a difference as anyone else."

AISLING BRYNE, CEO, NUW

According to WRAP analysis cited by the company, members offset 25% of the resources that would have been used in the making of a new garment with each share. With every four items shared, they offset one garment from going to landfill. Nuw's analysis suggests that they are, in fact, more likely to offset more than 60% of resources as fashion has got exponentially faster. Aisling says: "People may be going from seven wears per piece, for example, to one or two. We want to encourage them to become more emotionally attached to the pieces that they own, so we can move away from this buy, wear and dispose mentality."

As part of the education process, Nuw has partnered with the London Waste and Recycling Board to create a carbon, waste and water calculator, allowing members to upload information about their garments and track the offsets through the platform.

We have advised Nuw Pro Bono on a range of different business matters including its commercial agreements, intellectual property assets, employment contracts, corporate finance and tax arrangements. "I wouldn't have been able to keep the business going or reach our next round of fundraising had it not been for that support," says Aisling. "It has made the world of difference."

"The contribution that the retail sector makes towards carbon emissions is astounding—but ethics are changing," says Megan Paul, a Partner in our Commercial team. "We're seeing a movement to address the social and environmental costs of fast fashion right across the industry—it is our privilege to support Aisling and innovative social enterprises like Nuw, and it's important to us to be part of that change."

Images: Top right: Nuw CEO Aisling Byrne; Top left and bottom: The peer-to-peer clothes sharing app aims to mitigate the environmental and human cost of fast fashion. Courtesy of Nuw





People, purpose, and partnership

The extraordinary people that make Charles Russell Speechlys what it is today have long since cared deeply about creating a lasting, positive impact in the world.



Larissa Joy
Non Executive Director and
Member of Board of Trustees,
Charles Russell Speechlys Foundation

This report, a new initiative this year, showcases some of that impact. It begins to demonstrate the profound commitment that the firm and its people have to the communities in which they work and live.

But to really get a sense of the commitment, and the way that it infuses life at the firm, I would invite you to look beyond the written report into the heart of the firm. Even by the time this report is published, the people that make up the firm will have contributed more time, deployed more expertise and helped more organisations who most need their skills and experience.

There will be further inspiring examples of how Charles Russell Speechlys people and teams have applied their skills to help groups, people and communities that most need the expert business and legal skills that Charles Russell Speechlys people bring to the table.

But it is not just about skills and expertise. It is also about approach. The humility, emotional intelligence and intellectual curiosity that

characterises the firm's approach to its work in this area is a joy to experience. As a result, the newly formed Charles Russell Speechlys Foundation begins its work from a position of strength in a culture where the commitment to 'doing the right thing in the most emotionally intelligent way' is already embedded in the firm's way of working with its clients, communities and people.

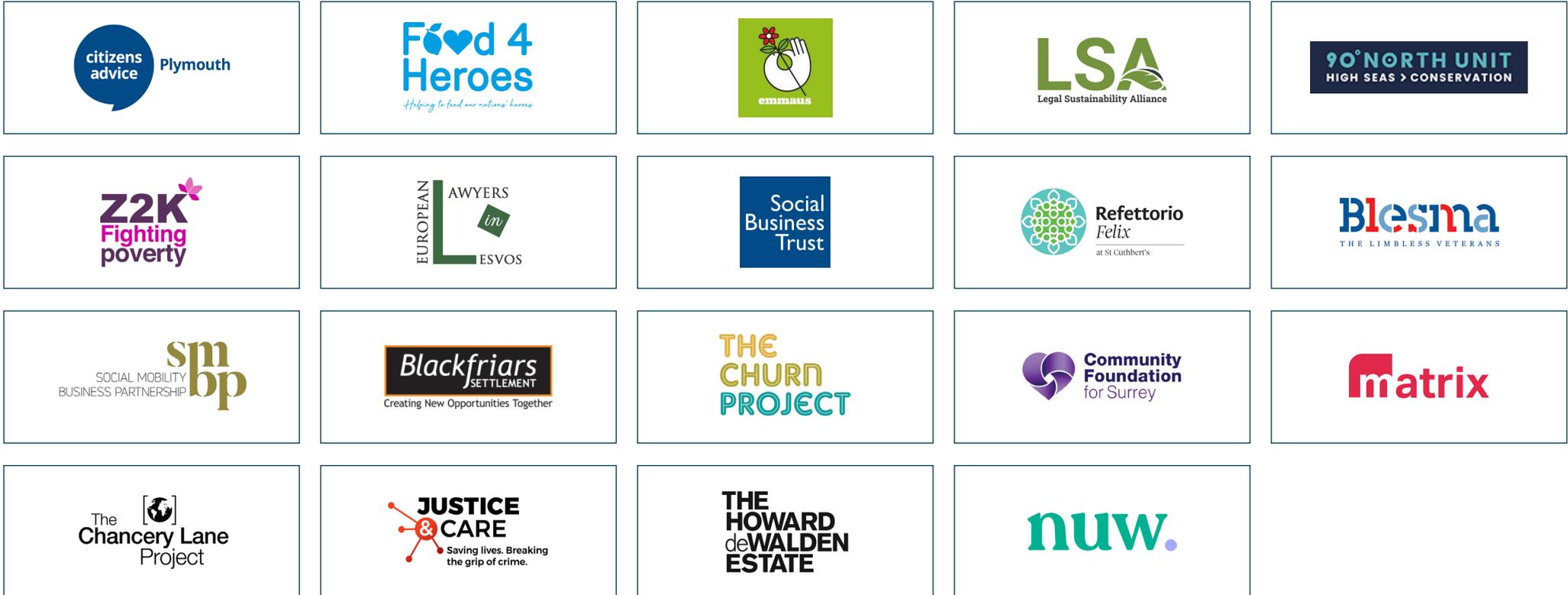
"The humility, emotional intelligence and intellectual curiosity that characterises the firm's approach to its work in this area is a joy to experience"

So if you have read this report, and are excited about what you read, please reach out to the people you know at Charles Russell Speechlys, or get in touch to discuss. The firm has partnership working at its heart and will be delighted to explore with you ways that it can work in partnership to leverage its impact.



Special thanks

We are grateful to the following organisations for their support and participation in this report.





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