



Social: Impact report

2023



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What social impact means to us

Social impact is the **long-term difference** we make to the people and places we work with. As a small business operating in the communications and impact space it means:

- ✓ Running our business in a responsible, sustainable way by locking our commitment to make a material positive impact on society and the environment into our business object.
- ✓ Looking after our employees and providing them with an environment in which they can all thrive and achieve their potential.
- ✓ Making a positive impact in the communities in which we operate through in-kind support and direct financial contributions.
- ✓ Tracking, managing and reducing our environmental impacts.
- ✓ Being transparent in how we monitor and report our social impact.



About us

Our mission is to create the conversations that drive positive social change.

We do this by:

01

Supporting our clients

Working with clients who are committed to improving the places where they operate.

02

Our work

Delivering communications strategies and campaigns that create change.

03

Demonstrating impact

Helping our clients to demonstrate their social impact and share it with the right people.

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2023

Leader's letter

Social

2023 was a landmark year for Social, marking our first decade in business. We celebrated our tenth anniversary with an event themed around '10 years of business with purpose', looking at how good employment transforms lives.

The centrepiece of the event was a panel discussion featuring stories and discussions from some of the incredible people we have worked with during the last 10 years. It was both informative and inspirational and it was a privilege to listen to them.

Like many businesses, we have felt the challenges of the economic headwinds of the last few years. That meant that early in 2023 we underwent a restructure, which was tough for everyone affected - but we also used the opportunity to update our management structure, putting in post a new senior leadership team. And this prompted us to redouble our focus on our social and environmental impact.

By the end of the year we had refreshed our vision and values, agreeing an updated purpose which put social impact at the front and centre of all we do and refocused on our core strengths, delivering imaginative and rigorous communications, engagement and ESG consultation to businesses across place, infrastructure and the built environment.

'We create the conversations that drive positive social change' is our new vision, one that we arrived at following consultation with colleagues at every level and which reflects what our clients tell us matters to them.

2023 was a year of change - and that was challenging at times - but we put in place the building blocks for success in the future. And we are seeing that play out now. B Corp remains at the heart of our business strategy and this report sets out what we have accomplished and our next steps.

Sinc



Pete Wrathmell
Managing Director

Governance

We reviewed our strategic vision this year to put **positive social impact at the heart of all our work**. After extensive consultation with our colleagues - including focus groups and workshops - we updated our vision:

“We create the conversations that drive positive social change.”



We launched it in the summer of 2023, along with updating our values. Following staff consultation, we decided to stick with *Ambition, Courage and Empathy* and added *Pride*. We celebrate staff who show these values with quarterly CAPE awards, when anyone can nominate any of their colleagues.

We updated our performance management forms to include objectives on social, environmental and equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). This puts these matters squarely at the heart of our business. They can be delivered through activities like supporting our clients, taking part in volunteering or training to improve our understanding.

We have an EDI Group made up of representatives from across the business and now systematically share all proposed policy changes and other significant decisions to understand any potential conflicts with EDI.

Client focus:



2023:
155 adopters

2022:
120 adopters

2021:
98 adopters

2020:
77 adopters

We have worked for **Sustainability for Housing** for three years. It runs the Sustainability Reporting Standard, a voluntary framework for housing associations which covers 46 ESG considerations such as affordability, safety standards and zero carbon targets.

The framework supports effective governance by enabling housing providers to measure, manage and report on their ESG performance and risks in a transparent, consistent and comparable way. Ultimately, SfH sees the SRS as a way to help drive positive social outcomes.

Our role as communications partner to SfH is to help build a community, raise profile and encourage engagement around the reporting standard. We are proud to have played our part in helping to grow the number of adopters to 155 organisations in June 2023, covering housing associations and investors, responsible for more than 2 million homes across the UK.

Workers

Life Happens is the backbone of our business and has been since 2018. It's *our promise* to team members that we have their backs, whatever life throws at them.



We ran a number of staff focus groups during spring 2023 and the overwhelming feedback was that Life Happens remains very important to our colleagues.

It is also regularly cited by external partners as being a distinctive and memorable feature of our culture.



In recognition of the financial pressures of the last couple of years, we introduced a Life Happens Loan Scheme at the end of 2022. It's an interest free loan, worth up to £1,500 to cover unexpected costs and to help staff manage their personal cash flows.

We also paid out staff bonuses to reflect the hard work by our team, in spite of the business overall making a loss this year.



We hold quarterly staff surveys, including tracking our employee Net Promoter Scores (eNPS). We were pleased to see a significant increase in levels of employee satisfaction following our restructure. By the end of the year, it had returned to 30+, rated as 'Good' in eNPS terms.



Workers



We work closely with our **Staff Engagement Group (SEG)** to review plans and proposed changes.

Examples include refining policies setting out our approach to mental health and wellbeing support for our team, focusing on people rather than processes.

“I thought the Life Happens Loan was an excellent addition to the support available for staff, and being able to use it to pay upfront for my autism assessment has made an enormous difference in my life.”
- James, Social

Staff Development



70 days invested

We continued to invest in learning and development for our team, with 70 days invested in developing and training staff.

Training included leadership development, Continuing Professional Development and courses on specific software packages, among others.

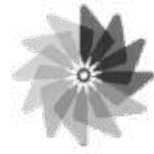
12 staff promoted

And in addition 12 staff were promoted internally, reflecting the increased number of opportunities flowing into the business with our restored focus on our core sectors of the built environment, housing associations and ESG consultancy.

We also welcomed our first apprentice into the business, a Business Administration Apprentice via the Growth Company.



Client focus:



Ahead Partnership™
Unlocking social and economic potential

EXTRA



As a connected and collaborative team, we love to make connections between our clients. Two of our longest-standing clients are **Ahead Partnership** and **Extra MSA (Motorway Service Areas)**, who we have worked with since 2018 and 2017 respectively.

We introduced them to one another and they have forged a powerful partnership that makes a real difference in their local communities and to their respective team members.

Ahead Partnership work alongside employers, stakeholders, educators and community partners to help young people achieve their full potential. They have run several programmes for Extra MSA at Leeds Skelton Lake Services.

Working with Extra MSA staff, the teams educated local primary school children about ecology and local wildlife at the site. After 2023's event, **98% of students said that they felt more motivated to protect the environment following their participation.**

And the project gave Extra MSA's team a different perspective on the impact of their work.

Customers

Our collaborative partnerships with our customers are fundamental to our business.

We formalised our commitment to enhance our clients' social value efforts through the Social Promise, putting our philosophy into action.

It's our commitment to our clients that when they work with us, they get much more than a communications and creative agency, but a truly collaborative partner who will help them build a lasting legacy through their work.

Unlocking the potential of the communities where we work is what makes us tick. It's been the driving force of our business from day one - and with our B Corp certification, it's locked into our business model.

Not only are we legally bound to consider people, planet and profit, we are committed to considering them for you too. That's what our Social Promise is all about.

We know that the community is at the very heart of placemaking – and that's why we go the extra mile. Our promise to clients is support that goes way beyond contractual commitments. It includes helping to nurture grass roots to transform neighbourhoods, building civic pride in communities that may feel forgotten or unheard.



MacBook Pro

Client focus: **LOVELL**
HOMES

“Thank you for all the opportunities you have given us this year, they have all been amazing and I have learned and taken a lot from each one of them, I’m glad we were able to work well together. I have to agree with you that a highlight this year was meeting and working with you !!”

- Lovell apprentice



In 2023 our client **Lovell** had a ‘crazy Idea’: to develop a movement in the housing industry which would improve the life outcomes of young people who had experienced homelessness or care.

It was the perfect opportunity to put the Social Promise into action.

Launched in the West Midlands, the initiative was a partnership between youth homelessness charity St Basils, Birmingham Children’s Trust, the Care Leaver Covenant and Birmingham City Council. The objective was to provide ‘a universal family’ that surrounds and supports the young person through the critical and challenging transition to living independently, providing a package of support to address their needs.

We worked with partners throughout the project, ensuring the voices of young people were at the heart of all discussions. We developed a brand (co-designed with young stakeholders), created a launch pack for the media, produced an animation and ran a launch event attended by leaders from the public and private sector in Birmingham.

The resulting brand - ‘**We Got You**’ - was warmly welcomed by young apprentices, Lovell and their partners and the wider network of stakeholders.

Environment



We are an SME with a low negative impact on the environment and a commitment to comply with all relevant legislation while minimising and reducing our environmental impact.

We ran *two offices* during 2023, both in city centre locations selected for their public transport links. We also introduced a [Travel to Work](#) loan scheme, to support the purchase of season tickets, and a Bike to Work scheme for staff interested in cycling to work.

In preparation for a planned relocation, we identified a new head office space with a Certified B Corp landlord, which we hope will put us in a better position in 2024.

We updated environmental policy to formally reflect home working though in practice it had been the dominant base since the covid lockdowns began.

We have continued to offset carbon emissions through Ecologi but are committed to reviewing our practice in light of changing legislation and as we deepen our knowledge in this area.

We also took part in beta testing for [Ecologi Zero](#) which is a tool that monitors carbon footprints for SMEs.



Client focus: Eurowind Energy™

Eurowind energy is the largest wind and solar developer in Denmark. The company specialises in the development, construction and operation of renewable energy parks.

We supported them on the public consultation on the Uisenis Wind Farm on the Isle of Lewis. Working in a remote island community, we ran community consultation meetings and translated consultation materials into Scottish Gaelic.

By using the latest turbine technology, Uisenis Power Limited will be able to generate the optimum levels of energy with fewer turbines.

If approved by the Scottish Government, when operational the wind farm will generate enough power to supply almost 165,000 homes per year.



Community

Doing business with purpose

We were proud to host the **Manchester B Local event for B Corp month** in March 2023. We welcomed 40 guests from B Corps and companies interested in finding out more about certification. Greater Manchester Poverty Action (now known as Resolve Poverty) gave a memorable presentation on the impact of poverty in the city region and what businesses can do to help.

A member of our team also *became one of the Manchester B Local co-chairs* in July and has helped to organise a number of B Local sessions, bringing B Corps together and looking at how we can all develop and improve as a community.

In October we marked our 10th anniversary with an event, **'Ten years of Business with Purpose'** looking at the role of good employment in breaking down barriers to social mobility. We held the event at Manchester's Everyman cinema, in partnership with the *Good Employment Charter*, and were delighted to host a panel chaired by Vimla Appadoo, featuring TV architect and social housing campaigner George Clarke, Matthew Gordon, chief executive of social impact company Spectra and Gillian Drakeford MBE, business advisor and formerly chief executive of Ikea in the UK.

Each of our speakers shared *powerful, sometimes moving stories*, of lessons they had learned during the working lives, and how we could open up opportunities for young people from all backgrounds. **It was a powerful and inspiring event.**



Featuring:

George Clarke
TV Architect and
Social Housing Campaigner

Matthew Gordon
Chief Executive at Spectra

Gillian Drakeford MBE
Business advisor former
chief executive at IKEA

Community

Social &



As this report covers a slightly longer period than normal, we have welcomed *four interns* from the **Channel 4 Content Creatives programme**, which helps young people who come from backgrounds which are underrepresented in the media.

Participants take part in an intensive two-month training programme before doing a four-month paid internship in a media/ creative business.

It's our privilege to have been in the first cohort of businesses who signed up to this programme and to have welcomed four such talented young people into our business during the last 15 months. Two joined us from October 2022 – February 2023 and a further two from November 2023 – March 2024. We also welcomed our first apprentice and valued the energy and creativity all these young people brought to our business.

We decided to host two interns from the Taylor Bennett Foundation, which supports young people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities to enter careers in the PR and creative sectors.

They will join us in 2024.

Creating opportunities.



Client focus:



The Housing Finance Corporation (THFC) provides more than £8bn to the UK social housing sector. It is a not-for-profit business that raises funding via the debt capital markets and loans money to housing associations, retaining surpluses to ensure it continues to meet the evolving needs of the affordable housing market in the future.

We are a strategic partner to THFC, supporting with communications, stakeholder engagement, research, creative services, ESG reporting and customer-facing events.

The latter included helping them run seminars on the cost-of-living crisis and the links between health and housing for housing associations. At both events, their clients came together to share lessons learned, best practice and practical takeaways.

THFC also made a significant donation to the Trussell Trust as part of the sector-wide 'More than Homes' campaign to raise £1 million for the anti-poverty charity and foodbank network.

Volunteering

We have maintained our policy of **five days' volunteering leave** for all our staff members which has enabled some brilliant charitable and community work by our colleagues.

Across the business we recorded 169 hours of volunteering activity, approximately 24 days.

Community work by our colleagues:

- Act 4 Africa
- Yes
- Various school/ college governor posts
- Girl Guiding
- Beechwood Cancer Care
- Spectra
- Booth Centre
- Essex Police volunteering
- Hate crime training
- Supporting student projects

We also made donations to the following charities:

- Beechwood Cancer Care Centre
- Birmingham Children Hospital Charity
- Brain Tumour Research
- Hamara – a local charity supporting refugees and asylum seekers in the city
- Rainbow Services (Harlow)
- Spectrum Gaming
- The Rob Burrows Centre for Motor Neurone Disease
- Winston's Wish
- Yum – Armley Action Team – a local food pantry in Armley, Leeds

Now & Next



Update

We are due to recertify as a B Corp in July 2025 and have been reviewing our original submission.

There are some areas where we have already made **good progress** and others where we will continue to develop in the year ahead.



Current B Corp scores and updates

| Pillar | Verified Score 2022 | Progress |
|-------------|---------------------|---|
| Governance | 17.6 | Since our last report we have updated our performance review forms to include social and/ or environment goals for all team members. |
| Workers | 38.7 | We have opened up our medical cashplan Healthshield to all employees upon appointment, which was previously only available once people had passed their probationary period. Our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) and Xerlife, a healthy eating and wellbeing app, are also available to our colleagues from day one. |
| Community | 20.0 | We were delighted to welcome our first apprentice into the business in November 2022. Joining us straight from sixth form, he was significantly younger than the average age of our employees and brought lots of fresh energy and ideas into the business. Since his departure (to return to full-time education) we have recruited another apprentice, as well as a number of young people joining us straight from university or training courses. This has increased the diversity of our workforce age and opened up new opportunities for young people in our communities. |
| Environment | 5.3 | 2023 saw us undertake a significant restructure to the business and securing the sustainability of our business was a priority. We are committed better understanding our environmental impact during 2024 and had laid the foundations for that by the end of 2023, including identifying a new office with a landlord who is a Certified B Corp and better tracks energy and waste management. |
| Customers | 6.7 | Our annual client satisfaction review is now embedded in our business, along with a formal client onboarding process introduced during 2023 to help clients better understand how our agency operates and who they can speak to if they have any worries. We've also updated our annual client satisfaction survey to gather how clients feel about our B Corp status. |

Sustainable Development Goals

The UN **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provide a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. *The intention is that they will be achieved by 2030.*

They recognise that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests.

Linking efforts by Social to enhance our positive social and environmental impact directly with the sustainable development goals is not an exact science. However, using B Corp's SDG Action Manager we have identified those SDGs with greatest relevance to our business model and areas of activity as a UK-based services business.

For selected goals we have highlighted significant achievements during the year and identified key areas for action in the coming year.





No poverty

We are a long-term supporter of **Lend With Care**, which provides micro-finance loans for entrepreneurs in low-income countries. While we can't split our figure year-by-year, we can calculate an average level of support *based on the past 4 years*:



In the UK, we have maintained our Real Living Wage accreditation.

We were privileged to host Greater Manchester Action on Poverty campaign (now rebranded as Resolve Poverty) in March 2023, who made a presentation to B Local members on the role of businesses on ending poverty in the region, educating attendees on the level of poverty and deprivation in Greater Manchester and how employers can support people in the workplace.



Gender equality

Our *super-flexible working practices* which has enabled both male and female members of staff to manage work around their **caring responsibilities.**

Through our work with a number of clients in the public and private sectors, we have supported women in leadership positions, helping them from writing speeches to facilitating media appearances, helping them to raise their profile and get their messages across.

Volunteering work by our team members, including with *Girl Guiding* and in schools, also helped to build confidence in girls in our community.

Social's approach to flexible working truly puts the individual first. Last year, I found the school holidays particularly challenging.

Although I didn't voice my concerns at the time, I was visibly upset and Social proactively offered me a solution that significantly reduced my stress.

This support has allowed me to manage work without feeling overwhelmed and be more effective. Social ensures that you can structure your work around your personal life, rather than forcing you to fit your personal life around your job.

I believe this ultimately makes for happier, loyal and therefore more productive employees.

- Claire, Social





Decent work & economic growth

We were very proud to welcome our *first apprentice* in November 2022, enabling a young person to continue their education and skills development while they were working with us. **We also recruited a graduate to their first full-time position.**

In the year ahead (2024) we will increase the opportunities for young people by offering more paid internships and through the further growth of our business.

We have committed to hosting two interns through the Taylor Bennett Foundation in 2024, a charity which helps young people from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic backgrounds pursue a career in public relations and communications through professional development programmes. We will maintain our commitment to *Channel 4 Content Creatives* as well.

We have continued our Real Living Wage accreditation for all staff.





Sustainable cities & communities

Our core sector is the built environment and our consultation teams work with our clients to ensure that the **voices of communities are heard** and acknowledged when planning developments in our towns and cities.

We have supported projects in England and Scotland including continuing our involvement with the sustainable regeneration of historic docklands in Liverpool and led community consultation about the Uisenis windfarm on the Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides.

We also conducted in depth research to explore consumer attitudes to domestic retrofitting in Leeds, conducting focus groups and public meetings.





Climate action

We introduced Cycle to Work scheme and a Travel to Work loan scheme to encourage staff to cycle or use public transport. We stepped up our recycling and used eco-friendly cleaning products.

In addition, we have educated ourselves on our environmental impact, recognising that we still have a lot to learn.

For our clients, in 2022-23 we ran two rounds of community consultation on the Isle of Lewis, gathering feedback as part of the planning process for a large wind farm.

If approved by the Scottish Government the windfarm is due to be operational by 2030 and will open up employment, economic and community benefits to local people as well as delivering clean energy for 105,000 homes.



Conclusion →

→ CONCLUSION:

Our next steps...

→ "For us, impact isn't a 'nice to have' – it's the foundation of our business."

After the celebrations of securing B Corp status in 2022, 2023 was a wake up call on how challenging it is to deliver and build on our commitments in a tough economic climate.

But we remain committed to our social purpose and to investing in B Corp, while managing significant changes in the business. Refreshing our vision, values and behaviours marked an important turning point. It has reinforced our commitment to using business as a force for good and placed our social purpose firmly front and centre of all we do and the decisions we make. It has also helped our staff feel more confident to work with our clients in a more holistic way, supporting their social impact beyond our core contractual commitments.

For us, impact isn't a 'nice to have' – it's the foundation of our business.

We have a good grasp of both the opportunities and challenges we face and have put the building blocks in place to address both, including strengthening our senior leadership team. We know there will be challenges ahead, but we are confident that we are moving in the right direction.



Social: Impact report

For any questions or queries,
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