

Gardner Leader Solicitors

ORGANISATION SIZE / Medium business (51 to 250 employees)

Fiona Curnow

White Hart House
Market Place
Newbury
Berkshire

BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF YOUR CSR APPLICATION

Intrinsic to our ethos as a firm, supporting the community has always been important to Gardner Leader. Staff at all levels are encouraged to be involved with the CSR Group. As detailed in our CSR Report, we're proud to say that we believe the firm is fairly unique as all staff have a say in which charity Gardner Leader supports annually. With regular fundraising activities, employees and clients of Gardner Leader have raised in excess of £21,500.00 since 2014. As well as providing fundraising opportunities, staff offer their time in sharing their knowledge and skills. In addition, we sponsor local community events, and deliver business mentoring opportunities to schools and university students. We are proud that five of our Partners are Trustees for charities at local and national level, with many more employees being personally involved with charity work. We believe that staff engagement is paramount to our success and something we believe contributes to excellence in client service. We are also proud to offer all employees opportunities to get involved with business improvement. In addition, staff wellbeing is vitally important and we feel that by having an active CSR Group offers opportunities to contribute to our staff's feeling of wellness. Gardner Leader takes its responsibility to the environment very seriously and is constantly looking at areas for improvement. Encouraging staff to work paperless, where this is not possible, we support recycling and effective waste management.

OVERALL SUMMARY

1. ENVIRONMENTAL

Car Share – staff are encouraged to car share and incentivised as the mileage claimed increases as more people are in the car.

Going paperless – we send as much as possible by email, minimising paper consumption, and ask suppliers to do the same. Where it's not possible to go paperless, we recycle. GL donates a lump sum each year to the firm's charity in lieu of corporate Christmas cards.

Energy saving – staff encouraged to turn off all electrical items when not in use. We have reduced kettles being boiled by providing hot water thermos flasks in meeting rooms.

Green water cooling machines use water directly from our mains and turn off when not in use, saving between 25-45% in energy and carbon efficiency.

Suppliers – where possible we try to use ethical products and suppliers. E.g. reusable fabric bags made from renewable materials.

Waste Management/Recycling – recycling bins throughout offices with clear instructions.

Stationery - ordering is monitored to minimise waste. Stationery rooms are stocked with previously used items which can be reused by others.

2. WORKPLACE

People

We have extended our objective "to be the Thames Valley law firm which clients want to use and which the best people want to work for, creating a platform from which we can extend our reach beyond that core area." This builds on previous objectives and demonstrates we are constantly pushing ourselves to improve. For clients to want to work with us and people to want to work for us, we must strive to make it a great place to be.

Customer Care

We undertook a major client survey in

2014 assessing client satisfaction. Overall feedback was positive but we identified areas for improvement. We embarked on an ongoing continuous improvement programme which we called Evolve, to bring benefits of constant review/improvement to how we deliver excellent customer service. By actively involving staff at all levels we drive better staff engagement, which is key to performance and success.

Our client satisfaction scores are consistently above other firms in our membership group, LawNet, at 96% and recognised by legal directories year on year.

Diversity/Equal Opportunities

We're committed to providing equal opportunities in employment and opposing all forms of workplace discrimination. All job applications and employees receive equal treatment regardless of sex, age, sexual orientation, marital status, race, religion, religious beliefs, colour, nationality, creed, ethnic or national origin, gender

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reassignment or disability. It is imperative to ensure that our most important resource, our staff, are treated in a fair and effective way.

Leadership/Employee Communication

Derek Rodgers, Managing Partner since 2011, is committed to engaging all staff by ensuring that GL is open to new ideas. Derek encourages transparency and openness across the firm where possible, by sharing information about the firm's performance.

- Each new recruit receives a welcome handwritten note from Derek on their first day.
- Derek strongly believes in coaching and mentoring. He ensures staff feel valued by thanking people for their contributions and recognises performance beyond expectations. Where problems arise, Derek ensures that they are dealt with fairly and supportively. We share success and responsibility for dealing with difficulties, reflecting our value that we all work as one team.
- Derek has introduced publication of 'Know the firm to promote the firm' which summarises information about the firm and ongoing messages to promote current news/developments.
- Derek completely rewrote our Staff Handbook giving it a lighter touch which reflected the style and humour of GL.
- When reporting the results from the annual staff survey, Derek is careful to highlight negative comments, explaining how the firm will address them then ensures improvement happens.

Engagement

That people enjoy working at Gardner Leader is something we are proud of, and is demonstrated in excellent client service.

In 2011, 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018 we

carried out staff surveys. Engaging staff is key to improving client service. Our top six scores were achieved in the following statements:

- GL cares about its staff
- I understand what GL is trying to achieve
- I respect my manager
- Quality is important to GL
- GL tries to improve how it does things
- GL has high standards

In 2011, staff engagement levels were at 77%, since Derek Rodgers became Managing Partner have increased to 94%.

- 99% agree/strongly agree they understand what GL aims to achieve, up from 97% last year
- 98% believe GL cares about staff - up from 95% last year.

Flexible Working/Family Commitment

We aim to be flexible wherever possible, always considering whether we can accommodate part-time working/other flexible arrangements. Over 30% of employees work flexibly making us an attractive and progressive employer.

Flexible leave trialled from January 2019 with all staff taking as much holiday as needed.

Occupational Health & Safety

GL takes H&S of its staff seriously, with dedicated H&S representatives across all three offices.

Learning and Development

GL's Staff Handbook sets out ways staff can develop into leadership roles. We are constantly looking to improve and have recently introduced quarterly Career Conversations in place of annual PDR/ Appraisal system. The conversations, are more focused and have one theme i.e. 'Strengths & Talents' & 'Leaning/

Development'. Conversations enable GL to accurately support staff in their development. GL takes staff feedback seriously and the recent Evolve Cycle focussed on promotion prospects for administration staff. Recommendations will be shared firm-wide and the Steering Group will determine which recommendations to implement effectively.

Training/Education

GL provides the following staff training:-

- To comply with CPD requirements.
- Areas of law/other topics relevant to development.
- For sales and marketing provided by consultancies.
- In IT systems.
- To enable career progression i.e Legal Executive/completion of LPC.
- To ensure industry compliance.

LawNet members share experiences and knowledge. Delivered by experts, linked to the SRA's Statement of Solicitor Competence, LawNet events are relevant and interactive, enabling learning and discussion opportunities with other LawNet members.

Employee Benefits

After successful completion of the probationary period, staff are entitled to join the pension scheme which includes a 3% contribution by the firm.

GL recently overhauled its bonus scheme to a formal structured scheme for all staff to recognise the varied contribution at all levels.

Employee benefits include a summer party, Christmas party, an hour off on your birthday, flu jab, death in service and contributions to eye tests and glasses.

The firm subscribes to Perkbox giving employees product discounts, with a 24/7 telephone employee assistance programme and e-learning opportunities.

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3. PHILANTHROPY

- Historically, GL has regularly supported local groups and charities.
- CSR Group created in 2014.
- CSR Group made up of 37 staff members firm-wide.
- CSR Committee consisting of 5 CSR members.
- GL encourages all staff to be involved with CSR Group.
- Charity of the Year' selected by firm-wide vote, nominated by staff.
- Charities of the year since 2014 - Naomi House, Newbury District Cancer Care Trust, Bloodwise and Swings and Smiles.
- Total funds raised since 2014 to date £21,618.21.
- CSR Group timetables regular fundraising events, with individuals organising each event.
- 'Will Week' service provided for Charity of the Year.
- % discounts offered to clients introduced by the charity.
- Skills provided to individual charity – i.e. social media. Assisted with Newbury District Cancer Care Trust's Twitter page '@Official_NDCCT'.
- Penny Wright – pro bono advice to charities.
- Staff volunteer at charity organised events.

- Sponsorship of community events includes Newbury Lions Fireworks display, Thatcham Fun on the Broadway, Newbury Real Ale Festival, animated film event at The Corn Exchange and Berks, Bucks & Oxon Junior Lawyers Division Ball.
- Sponsored Evelyn Williams, a local rower, rowing solo across the Atlantic in the Talisker Whiskey Atlantic Challenge in 2015/16.
- GL supports national charity events, such as Children In Need.
- Staff take part in Cancer Research's Newbury Race for Life event <https://fundraise.cancerresearchuk.org/team/gardner-leader-llp>.

4. COMMUNITY

- GL provides work experience for Year 11 pupils from local schools in all three offices, together with university students.
- Through Stuart Durrant's involvement with the Twin Towns Association - www.newburytwintown.org.uk and with the Education Business Partnership - www.educationbusinesspartnership.co.uk, GL hosting Belgium students in 2019, from Newbury's Twin Town, Eeklo, for work experience.
- GL attends annual school careers fairs, mock interviews and business mentoring events.
- Staff volunteer through Inspiring The Future www.inspiringthefuture.org.

- Involved with the Twin Towns Association - www.newburytwintown.org.uk. GL provides meeting rooms for committee meetings.
 - Seona Myerscough - Chair of Citizens Advice Newbury. GL provides meeting rooms for CAB committee meetings.
 - Jo Barton - Trustee of Friends of Young Carers (West Berkshire); and
 - Member - Newbury Lions.
 - Diane Yarrow - Trustee - The Prince Philip Trust Fund.
 - Michelle Di Gioia - Trustee - Newbury Corn Exchange.
 - Stuart Durrant – Trustee - West Berkshire Mencap.
 - Stephen Bennett - Trustee - Daisy's Dream.
 - Michal Freeman-Shor – Ambassador - The Law Society's Return to Law programme; and
 - Ambassador - Woman Lawyers and Mothers group; and
 - Management Committee member of MDA UK; and
 - Member/volunteer at Maidenhead Synagogue Ltd.
- * All appendices are highly confidential

File Upload

<http://csr-accreditation.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/vfb/2018/09/Gardner-Leader-CSR-Website-Link.docx>

<http://csr-accreditation.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/vfb/2018/09/Gardner-Leader-press-releases.pdf>

<http://csr-accreditation.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/vfb/2018/09/Gardner-Leader-CSR-Bloodwise-letter.pdf>

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