

## Cloudy Group

ORGANISATION SIZE / Small (up to 50 employees)

David Hall

Company Address  
8 Homeground,  
Buckingham Industrial Park  
MK18 1UH

### BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF YOUR CSR APPLICATION

Cloudy Group puts people first, which is why practices for looking after our people, our customers and our community is at the heart of what we do.

We are a managed service company whose customers (comprising councils, legal firms, and SMEs) know the importance of serving community as well as we do. As such, demonstrating our commitment to our corporate social responsibility has been something we have been doing for a long time, without necessarily having the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) name applied or an accreditation to document it as such.

We have a rich history of supporting our local community through various philanthropic “giving” activities and in the last five years have honed this socially responsible action into a more structured programme of work that has embedded these practices into our day-to-day business.

The Cloudy Enterprise Academy is our investment in the future of digital services and young people through school engagement programmes like the “App-Prentice Challenge”. We created this programme to galvanise our business network beyond normal business transactions, and coordinate it with educational partners so that we can share best practices from our specialist areas in order to target our efforts and resources in helping students in greatest need with our expertise in the interests of their future careers in IT and tech.

We have a philosophy of empowering people through learning and practical education. The Cloudy Enterprise Academy and App-Prentice Challenge explicitly demonstrate this, but we also employ a strong focus on training in our customer service (through the Cloudy Training Academy <https://www.cloudyit.co.uk/training/>) and internally with our employees.

Innovation and entrepreneurship drive our business forward, hence our commitment to an effective apprenticeship and work experience scheme. Three of our 10 members of staff have come from apprenticeships; four if you include Managing Director, David Hall, which naturally ties to our vision for the long-term opportunities the Cloudy Enterprise Academy creates.

Since conducting our CSR audit for this application, we have developed a CSR Company Policy to share with all our employees. We have identified areas for improvement, and in the spirit of us striving for continual improvement, measures are already being put in place to drive positive change in all areas but under the environmental pillar particularly. Such measures include (but are not limited to) employing a new partnership with the Green Earth Appeal which is being put in place for planting trees to offset carbon.

### OVERALL SUMMARY

#### 1.0 CSR Environment - Energy:

We manage our energy consumption in the office building by having central control of our office heating and air conditioning system. We are currently looking into

switching our lighting to low energy bulbs and LEDs, and when our energy contract is next up for renewal we will be switching to a renewable energy supply.

To help with our company's good energy conservation housekeeping, we are

implementing energy-saving awareness posters in the workplace to encourage employee engagement in improving our energy (and water saving) efficiency. We are using these posters in relevant locations around the office to raise awareness of

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our collective energy-saving measures, but we plan to look at how we can widen these awareness campaigns and measure change (in conjunction with the financial benefits) with new methods of encouraging employees to engage with them in future.

## 1.2 CSR Environment - Natural resources:

As above, we have water-saving awareness posters in the workplace (kitchen and bathroom) as part of our commitment to encouraging employees to help the company save water and energy.

We are committed to minimising the impact of our activities on the environment as part of our Corporate Social Responsibility and are currently partnering with the not-for-profit social enterprise, the Green Earth Appeal (<https://greenearthappeal.org/>), to help protect people and planet. Our joint scheme will mean that for every new client of the Cloudy/IT modernisation programme (<https://www.cloudyit.co.uk/modernisation/>), a tree will be planted in the developing world to help offset the carbon impact of their order. Further to this, we are also in the process of organising for a pre-agreed number of trees (estimated at 100) to be planted by the Green Earth Appeal initiative as another carbon off-setting and developing world community-building measure for our upcoming Cyber Security Virtual Summit, which is due to take place online on 30 November 2020.

Following our CSR audit, we are considering ways of reducing our dependence on oil and gas. In our current ongoing assessment of alternatives, we are looking into investing in electric vehicles upon renewal of our fleet car lease contract, the possibility of having solar PV panels on our office roof and divestment of our pension scheme from the fossil fuel industry.

## 1.3 CSR Environment - Travel:

We support minimising business travel and commuting time by encouraging use of technology for remote meetings. As a Microsoft partner and managed service provider, we are strong advocates of remote working and telecommunications and therefore encourage our clients and employees to use Microsoft Teams for

teleconference meetings as a fundamental part of their digital transformation “modernisation programme” with us. Not only do we suggest remote meetings as a first port of call, but we also conduct training, IT support and events online.

When we do have off-site meetings in-person, we car share as much as possible.

Subject to employee demand (which needs assessing), we will consider applying the Government’s Cycle to Work Scheme into our business as an employee benefit.

## 1.4 CSR Environment - Environmental supply chain management:

We do not operate a supply chain policy but as a standard we do source from local suppliers as much as possible. Following our CSR audit, we intend to review how our activity can be streamlined to give us a more sustainable supply chain in future.

## 1.5 CSR Environment - Waste:

Minimising waste is a key point in our CSR strategy and environmental policy statement.

We follow government legislation for the disposal of hazardous waste, namely the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) and for recycling batteries.

We are mindful of using resources sustainably and encourage reuse and recycling. For example: We recondition computers for longer life and ensure those at end-of-life have their components to be recycled. We use compostable material in our customer gift boxes. We recycle paper, card, plastics, metals, glass, batteries etc through the local authority refuse collection bins and a dedicated battery bank.

In future, we will be more mindful of buying recycled toilet paper and kitchen roll for our office facilities and at an appropriate time we will review our printing paper and cartridges to see how recycled, refillable and more energy efficient options can be incorporated into our business in conjunction with new Print Managed Solutions we are offering to our customers (in collaboration with Syncro and Epson “eco-print technology”).

We also intend to encourage reduction of

food waste among our staff, by composting as much as possible, and will seek alternatives to plastic where we can once our energy-saving awareness campaigns gain more traction in-house.

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## 2. CSR Workplace

We care about our employees and ensure that we: Do not risk the health and safety of our employees and community and support diversity and inclusion. As our Staff Handbook sets out for our employees, fair labour practices ensure that our activities do not directly or indirectly violate human rights. Conditions of work include all of the following – as outlined in our Staff Handbook:

- Protection from risks to health and the occupational environment (administered by having a Health & Safety Policy shared with all employees)
- Fair wages and other forms of compensation
- Holiday allowance and pay
- Fair disciplinary and dismissal practices
- Proper maternity protection
- Proper sanitation
- Provision of kitchen facilities
- Allowing observance of national or religious traditions and customs
- Respecting the family responsibilities of workers by providing parental leave and, when possible, childcare

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- Any other facilities that can help workers achieve a proper work-life balance.

We have a flexible, open, and empowering team culture that results in us having a unified and generally happy workforce, where employees are included in company projects and initiatives as much as possible, and we occasionally socialise outside of work. All employees are on the customer mailing list and we encourage suggestions and ideas from the full team to help our company maintain strong innovation and continually improve the services offered and the way we operate. This has proven invaluable in the past as it not only helps to improve productivity but also encourages more autonomy and entrepreneurial spirit which has led to some of our younger members of staff in particular, being more open to challenges that help them develop new skills and that result in us adding more value to our customer services. A great example of this came from one of our young apprentices, Fin, who at aged 17 not only mentored 14 - 16 year olds in using Microsoft PowerApps as part of our App-Prentice Challenge, but who also added new Business Intelligence functionality to an app build project for a customer that exceeded the scope of work to deliver added value to them and to our company.

Training and skills development are central to what we do with our customers (<https://www.cloudyit.co.uk/training/>), so empowering staff with practical educational training and experience comes naturally for us. Many of our staff have come from apprenticeships, which Managing Director, David Hall, is a huge advocate of, having started as an apprentice himself.

Three of our 10 employees have come through work experience and apprenticeships: Denis joined directly from school, Fin joined our apprentice scheme, and most recently Dylan has gone from doing work experience (which we do every year with local school students) to starting an apprenticeship with Cloudy alongside starting at Milton Keynes College.

Denis has recently completed his certification for Cisco CCNA Routing and Switching, having also achieved qualifications in CompTIA Network+,

CompTIA Security+, CompTIA Server+ and CompTIA Network Infrastructure Professional through Cloudy.

Microsoft certification courses are being done by all engineers and the Microsoft 100 exams are currently being taken.

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### 3. CSR Community

Cloudy Group has a long and rich history of supporting our local community through various philanthropic "giving" and educational programmes which have been honed over the years into a more structured programme that has embedded these practices into our day-to-day business.

We have a strong commitment to supporting the development of young people into IT through the Cloudy Group Enterprise Academy (<https://www.cloudygroup.co.uk/enterprise-academy/>), wherein we have taken the "App-Prentice Challenge" (<https://www.cloudygroup.co.uk/app-pretice-challenge/>) to underprivileged schools in Buckinghamshire since 2018.

Our socially responsible work with our Enterprise Academy sees us working alongside local schools, colleges, universities, National Collaborative Outreach Programme partners (NCOPs) and our business partners (from SMEs and councils to charities and legal firms), and has been recognised by the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) as an inspiring 2 or 3 day programme for preparing young people for the fast-changing digital workplace.

We are proud to have been awarded the CEC's Small Employer of the Year

2019 (<https://www.cloudygroup.co.uk/2019/10/07/careers-excellence-awards-2019-cloudy-group-announced-small-employer-of-the-year-winners/>) which has recognised us as a socially responsible company and celebrates our App-Prentice Challenge programme on the national stage working alongside familiar names such as the Peter Jones CBE and BBC presenter, Nick Hewer.

This programme has benefits employing local businesses, suppliers, community and educational institutions, not only fostering stronger social relations but also creating potential job opportunities that further strengthen economic resources.

Our Enterprise Academy has three core components:

#### 1. Strategic leadership

At Cloudy Group, we understand the importance of having future workforce development embedded in our organisation's culture and we've seen how our business as well as that of our clients' and the wider community can benefit from supportive programmes of work engaging schools the way we are with the App-Prentice Challenge. This is why we have developed the Cloudy Enterprise Academy, which strategically leads our network of clients and other local employers to support our programme in schools, colleges and local group's coding clubs.

The Cloudy Enterprise Academy is our investment in the future of digital services and young people through school engagement programmes, where we galvanise our business network and coordinate with educational partners to share best practice from our specialist areas in order to target our efforts and resources to those in greatest need and provide our expertise in the interests of their future careers.

#### 2. Engagement with young people

The programme has had time and resources invested to provide a quality-assured programme for the schools. It has been built to ensure it is engaging for the young people involved, coordinates the contributions of external partners from employers and Higher Education

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stakeholders and has input from teachers and learning providers to support the development of employability and careers learning.

By delivering a rich programme that is inclusive and aimed at increasing employment skills and raising aspirations, we have provided a variety of meaningful encounters for the students to enjoy; not only with the business professionals they meet that can offer them personal guidance but also with a practical education using Microsoft devices (SurfacePro tablet and pens) and modern workplace Apps that show them digital ways of collaborating and producing their work.

We plan the core competency skills into the programme material and coordinate staff resource with the school-teachers and our educational partners to ensure that the needs of each pupil can be addressed appropriately throughout the programme. This means that Gatsby Benchmarks 1, 2, 3, 4 and 8 fall to the in-school professionals. Whereas, impactful ways of hitting Gatsby Benchmarks 5, 6 and 7 are delivered through post-event work experience we offer in conjunction with University visits and building Apps to serve the local community.

### 3. Sustainability

The App-Prentice Challenge is built as a flexible, accessible and collaborative programme that is dependent on the contribution of all stakeholders and the active engagement of its participating students. We know it's scalable as it has developed from one school to three over two years; where we're capable of taking the full Year 10 group or focusing on STEM-subject students as we did last year. Pre-Covid in late 2019, we were also approached by another educational provider to work with them in establishing the programme in the north west and were working with schools to conduct a much bigger local event with six schools.

Partners like Microsoft and The Readiness Company facilitate the innovative tools to make it inclusive for all. Whereas, our educational partners are integral to us targeting the schools and colleges in greatest need, coordinating with teachers,

and developing programme material so that it enhances career learning appropriately.

It's been designed to ensure that key messages relating to how the students' activities connect with their careers education are explicitly clear in the written and spoken material, and also to support an inspiring way of preparing young people for the world of work through developing IT, project and social employment skills.

Our Enterprise Coordinator and the Higher Education Liaison Officer from Study Higher helped us identify the schools based on their existing relationships. Mandeville School was chosen in 2018 due to being allocated on "Special Measures", whereas our 2019 entrants are within Study Higher's remit to promote social mobility for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Due to Study Higher's regular outreach activity work of this nature, we adopted the questions from their feedback forms to track performance, how the programme is received, and to support Study Higher's existing work tracking the career destinations of the young people involved. This information will be used to improve the effectiveness of the careers programme in future, which is complemented by Cloudy Group Director, David Hall, subsequently taking up the position of Aylesbury Vale Academy's Enterprise Advisor.

The legacy of the programme goes further than the App-Prentice Challenge events however, as our Enterprise Academy is helping to develop students from there as well as others that show an interest, such as those emerging from our links with local coding clubs. Just like the opportunities provided to the winners of App-Prentice Challenges, whereby we place them on a project to create a real-world App for their school or a local commercial organisation with our support, we are using our network of councils and business customers to create more and more app building opportunities that will help to support the educational and career prospects of young people in tech whilst delivering new Apps for the commercial market.

E.g. The winners of the first App-Prentice Challenge in 2018 created a "Clean Up" App for Wolverton & Greenleys Town Council – seen here presenting it to the

Town Mayor: <https://www.cloudygroup.co.uk/2019/05/23/clean-up-app/>

Some of the App-Prentice Challenge 2018 winners from Mandeville School went on to help with the 2019 event at the school on 25 and 26 June 2019. Here's what they had to say about it: <https://youtu.be/uuvxEI9xoYU>

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A Mandeville School student from the App-Prentice Challenge 2018 wrote this in his feedback report:

"i think the programme is beneficial for the people who are looking to step into the business world and gain a profession in the industry and it will give us a head start other people our age it also taught me even more leadership skills"

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A student from the App-Prentice Challenge 2019 wrote this in her feedback report after attending EntFest as a member of one of the winning school teams:

"Overall, i think the programme was a really good idea and i was honored that i had the chance to participate..."

"I think it has impacted my future decisions as i was not sure what to do after school but now i might do something in the tech industry."

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Aylesbury Vale Academy teacher and Outreach Programme Manager, Mr Anandavasagar, has this to say about CloudyGroup's App-Prentice Challenge: <https://youtu.be/fyhykbHuJ7c>

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PSHCE, Careers, and Critical Thinking Coordinator at The Mandeville School, Chris Penson, said this about the 2018 Challenge:

"This has been a fantastic experience for our students. As the first Year 10 Enterprise event, this pilot has proven how worthwhile it will be to do again.

"We've seen students engaging with their work in new ways as they've absorbed themselves in the project over the last three days. They've clearly enjoyed themselves whilst also pushing themselves academically and practically to take on the

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challenge and compete with their peers. It was great to see how empowering the technology and insights from the business partners have been for our students.”

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 Head-Teacher at Aylesbury Vale Academy, Roger Burman, elaborated on his Referee 1 statement with this additional comment and video interview on 27 June 2019: <https://youtu.be/Drfp9Xf-luQ>

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 Higher Education Liaison Officer from Study Higher, Jeffery Asante, had this feedback for us on 18 June 2019: [https://youtu.be/Wk\\_cOBEnyoo](https://youtu.be/Wk_cOBEnyoo)

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 Dave Oxley, Security Architect at McAfee, Enterprise Advisor, and Bucks UTC board member, provided this statement and video interview on 24 June 2019: <https://youtu.be/kLawz0qEIFk>

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 All App-Prentice Challenge videos, including the Vlogs and adverts created by the winning teams can be viewed on our dedicated YouTube channel at: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCManiMrgjpQomOzWpv0rKRw/featured>

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## 4. CSR Philanthropic

Whilst we do not have a policy for charities, every year we do choose a Charity of the Year to support and conduct fundraising activities to provide charitable donations

over the course of that year. The Florence Nightingale Hospice is the Cloudy Group charity of the year for 2020, a charity providing a range of services for people near end of life. Cloudy Group has been supporting the charity in a variety of ways, including:

- Developing an app for the charity through our award-winning App-Prentice Challenge programme
- Raising funds for the charity through sponsored sporting activities (<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/david-hall90>) such as marathons, Iron Man events and swimathons that our MD, David Hall, has participated in.

We invest corporate time, effort and funding to support young people and our community. For example, in previous years we have sponsored Winslow United FC's Under 9s team, raised money for the local Scout Hut and donated computers to local schools.

With the success and connections fostered by the Enterprise Academy, our Managing Director, David Hall, invests his time to community and youth education initiatives such as:

- Partnering with the Heart of Bucks community foundation to become an Ambassador for Buckinghamshire in the category of “Education, Employability and Training”.
- Volunteering to become an Enterprise Adviser for Aylesbury Vale Academy
- Participation on the Digital Skills Board and Community Board for Buckinghamshire Council

Beyond this focused attention on philanthropic CSR activity, we encourage our employees to volunteer on an ad hoc basis as well. As such, when local events such as the Buckingham Cricket Club attempting to break a Guinness World Records happen (as it did on bank holiday Monday 31 August 2020), a few employees from Cloudy Group gather to help livestream and record the event for greater promotion for such a good cause (re- <https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:6705753614515740672/>).

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