



MACFARLANES

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# Making a difference

Inclusion and CSR review 2020–21

# Introduction

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With the arrival of the global pandemic, 2020 presented challenges that few predicted, but looking back, it also created momentum that accelerated change. As a team we were amazed and inspired by how people in the firm responded to the immediate need, from donating unused commuting and coffee budgets, to providing careers advice to students who suddenly found themselves facing a very different world of work.

We are also grateful to everyone who remained committed to our existing programmes, such as reverse mentoring or our staff networks, adapting activities so they could continue and flourish virtually.

Following an extraordinary year, here we aim to celebrate just some of our highlights and commitment to CSR and inclusion at Macfarlanes.

Thank you

**Louise Zekaria**

Director of diversity and inclusion



## **Section 1: Connecting with communities during Covid-19**

- #Stayconnected
- Wellbeing during lockdown
- Supporting key workers
- Supporting small businesses

## **Section 2: Inclusion**

- Race and ethnicity
- Our staff networks
- Social mobility

## **Section 3: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)**

- Access to justice
- Supporting opportunity
- Charity partnerships
- Sustainable business

# Section 1

Connecting with our communities during Covid-19



# #stayconnected

We have all been affected by Covid-19. Although we have faced unprecedented challenges, it also demonstrates what can be achieved when businesses, charities and communities come together.

In response to the pandemic, we launched our #stayconnected campaign. The aim of this campaign was to offer further support, in addition to that provided by the virtual delivery of our regular CSR programmes, to those most heavily impacted by Covid-19.

Each member of staff has a community day that they can use to volunteer. During the pandemic this allocation was extended (and still remains so), so that all staff can spend an unlimited amount of time helping their local communities. Volunteers have been supporting local aid groups, sending letters to vulnerable individuals who have been shielding, offering career advice to disadvantaged students, providing pro bono legal advice to charities and sorting donations at local food banks.

Students in particular have been hit hard by Covid-19 due to disruption in education, challenges to accessing online learning and the loss of potential career opportunities. To help students from disadvantaged backgrounds stay connected with careers in law and Macfarlanes, we worked with over 100 students during this period offering one-to-one mentoring calls as well as an insight evening. We advertised the event through some of our diversity partners, including **Rare Recruitment**. Following on from the session, students were encouraged to apply for our pipeline programmes.

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DIVERSITY  
RECRUITMENT  
EXCELLENCE

# Wellbeing during lockdown

We know that these are testing times for our people, whether that be challenges with mental wellbeing, difficulty adjusting to new working patterns, caring for sick relatives or balancing childcare with work commitments. We have introduced a number of initiatives in order to support our people:

- We created an online hub to bring together a range of materials for employees to access, including wellbeing resources, tips for home working and useful information for parents and carers.
- We introduced a site where employees can share lockdown stories, activities, socials and stay posted.
- We hosted a series of wellbeing webinars delivered by external providers to share top tips on how to get a good night's sleep and look after mental health. All of these webinars were recorded and have been posted on the online hub so that all staff can access them.
- As in previous years, we marked Mental Health Awareness Week with a series of activities. These included creating a video featuring 12 employees talking about 12 top tips for maintaining good mental health and a lunchtime seminar, delivered by Dr Kamel Hothi OBE. In the seminar, Dr Kamel Hothi shared her battle with mental health and the strength she needed to stitch her personal and working lives together.

# Supporting key workers



Approximately 2,000 sheets of Macfarlanes acetate, usually used to cover seminar packs, were turned into face shields and donated to the NHS and other frontline workers. The firm donated the plastic sheets to biomedical device company Augment Bionics and the company used these sheets, along with donations received from several other law firms, to provide more than 29,000 face shields to frontline workers at over 40 hospitals and GP surgeries across the UK.

Each year the firm buys more than 750 Easter eggs for staff. During the lockdown, we donated all of these eggs to Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) to be distributed amongst staff and patients. The hospital was incredibly busy at that time, with children being transferred from other hospitals across London. The hospital staff were working around the clock, under huge pressure, to guarantee children at GOSH received the care they needed in the most difficult times. Watch this short video to see HR business partner, Laura Childs, delivering the Easter eggs.

Many of our staff have been volunteering to support vulnerable members of the community, as well as NHS staff - including cooking and delivering nutritious meals for staff at various London hospitals.

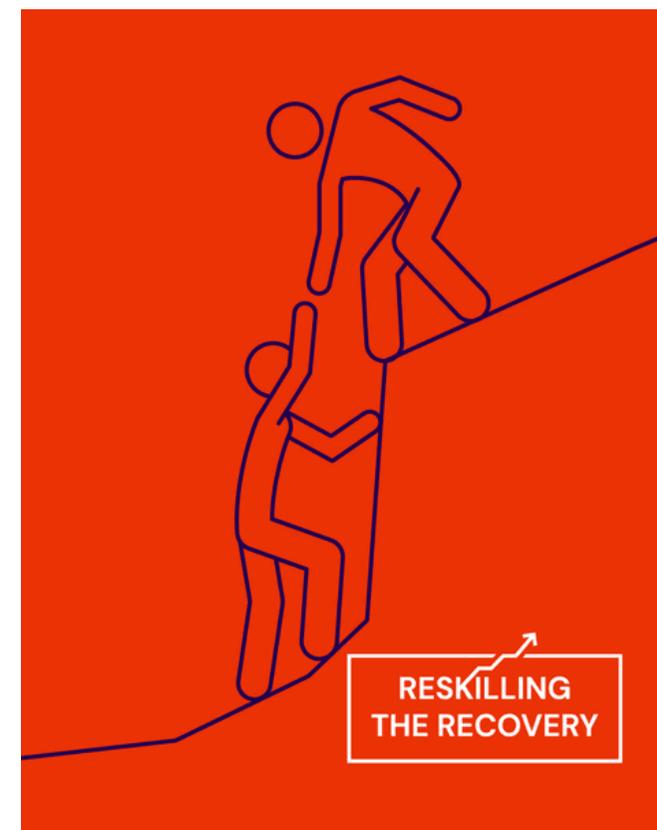
The photo shows some of the meals cooked by senior associate advocate Ben Webster and his wife, Christine, which were then delivered to the Royal London hospital.

# Supporting small businesses

## Macfarlanes is supporting three individuals on career builder programmes at Etec Group and Evolve Apprentices.

The damaging impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on businesses and job opportunities continues to increase. In October 2020, the firm pledged to support London's small businesses (SMEs) by donating some of its apprenticeship levy to the new "Reskilling the Recovery" campaign. (The apprenticeship levy was introduced in 2017, charged at a rate of 0.5% of an employer's paybill, as a way to fund new apprenticeships.)

Through the Reskilling the Recovery campaign, apprenticeship levy funds are being transferred to London's SMEs to help their employees develop the skills they need to meet the challenges presented by the pandemic, while also creating new employment opportunities. So far, this initiative has secured almost £1.5m in pledges.



# Section 2

Inclusion



## 2. Inclusion

In this review we are focusing on three areas of the firm's diversity and inclusion programme.

### Race and ethnicity

- Resources
- Black Lives Matter movement
- BME reverse mentoring programme
- Continuing the conversation
- Benchmarking our progress

### Our staff networks

- REACH
- Balance
- DAWN (Disability and wellbeing network)
- Pride

### Social mobility

- Graduate recruitment
- The EAGLES programme

In September, the firm was awarded the **Good Work Standard (GWS)** at excellence level, the highest level possible. The GWS is the Mayor of London's accreditation recognising the best employment practices in London businesses. The four pillars of the GWS are: fair pay and conditions; workplace wellbeing; skills and progression; and diversity and recruitment. By achieving the GWS, businesses signal their commitment to healthy, fair and inclusive workplaces.



# Race and ethnicity

Continuing to build a diverse and inclusive workplace was a priority in 2020.

In February, alongside our gender pay gap, we published our **ethnicity pay gap** for the first time, recognising the importance of being transparent about our challenges, actions and progress.

During 2019, some of our Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) staff took part in focus groups. In 2020 we implemented a series of initiatives which deliver on the feedback that came out of these sessions. We are really pleased to have received external recognition for our work in this space.

## Resources

During 2020 we focused on providing tangible tools and resources for everyone in the firm, so we could work together to achieve our goal.

Based on feedback, we developed the following resources.

- A **toolkit on how to be an effective ally**.
- **Cultural and religious events calendar**: this provides details of key cultural and religious occasions. Some of the benefits of the calendar are to prevent clashes when scheduling and to encourage open communication and engagement by using religious and cultural greetings to share well wishes with those celebrating.
- **A note on working with colleagues of different faiths**: this note is a starting point for allies to learn more about practices of mainstream faiths and how they might impact a workplace, so they can best support colleagues and clients.

# Black Lives Matter

The death of George Floyd and The Black Lives Matter movement's subsequent rise to prominence was a huge focus for 2020. We consulted with our REACH (race, ethnicity and cultural heritage) network to develop a programme to support colleagues, encourage discussion and enable learning.

- Two reflection sessions, one hosted by partner Alicia Thomas and the other hosted by a panel of people from across the firm. They spoke about their personal experiences and offered opportunities for open discussion, questions and the sharing of thoughts.
- A lunchtime seminar delivered by Afua Hirsch (British writer, broadcaster and best-selling author who also facilitated our BME reverse mentoring programme). Watch the short video for a snippet of what was discussed.
- The development of a dedicated site. This new forum provides employees with access to resources and facilitates online discussion to help individuals educate themselves on race-related issues.

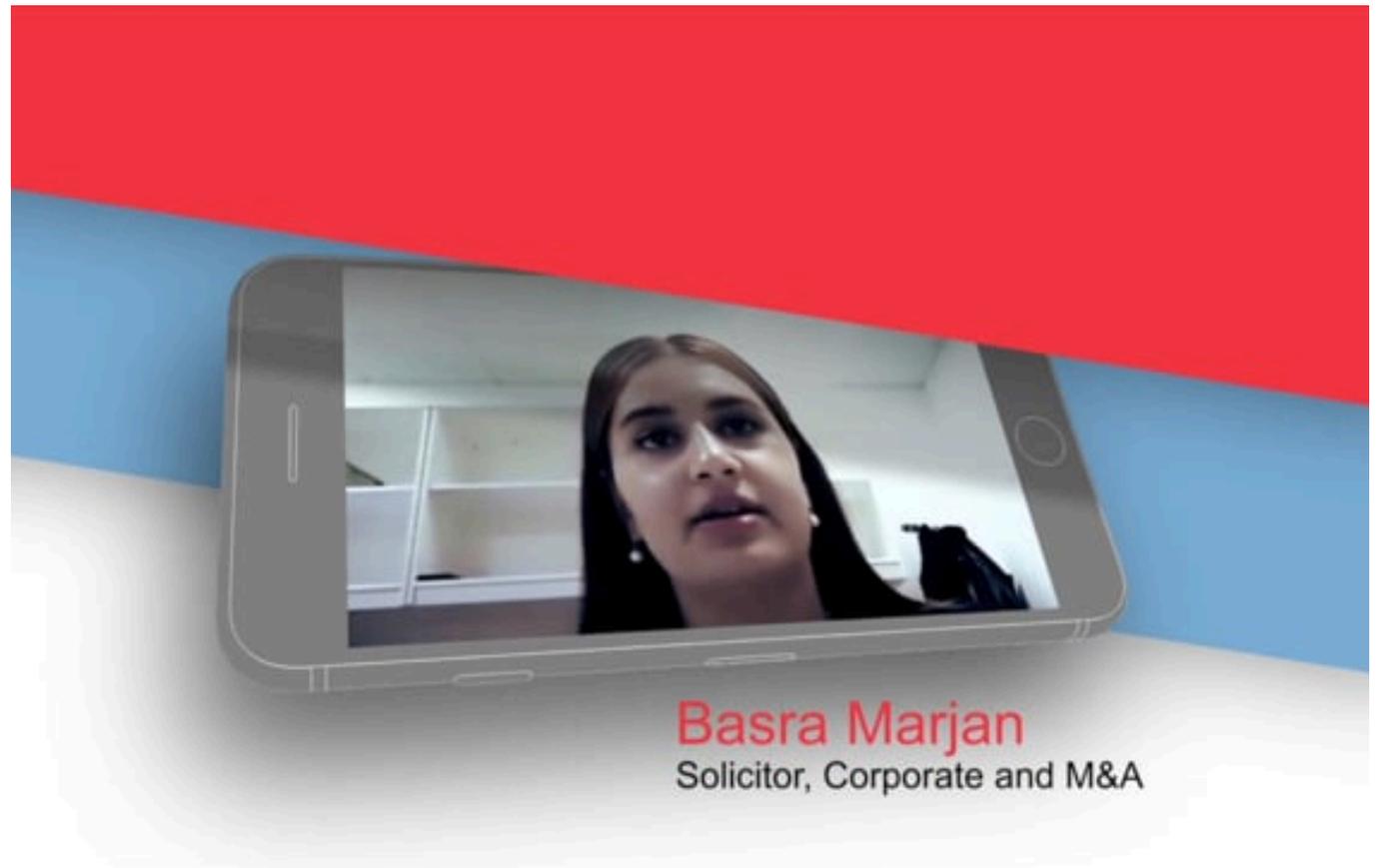


# BME reverse mentoring programme

Between February and September we ran our first cohort of the BME reverse mentoring programme.

Facilitated by **Afua Hirsch**, our policy committee and heads of main practice groups were mentored by more junior BME staff over the course of the year. The pairings followed a structured programme, including discussing books and podcasts relating to the BME experience and throughout lockdown the programme continued virtually. The programme concluded with agreed action points and suggestions put forward to our policy committee for consideration.

Watch this short clip from associate Basra Marjan and partner Dan Lavender, one of the pairings on the programme, to hear about their experience.



# Continuing the conversation

October marks Black History Month - a celebration of the history and contributions of black people. Following on from our BLM reflection sessions in June, we arranged a number of events and initiatives to help continue the conversation.

We ran a digital campaign featuring a **series of profiles** written by individuals across the firm.



## **Afua Hirsch: Learnings from our BME reverse mentoring programme**

Afua discussed learnings from facilitating our reverse mentoring programme. She also explored other topical issues, including the development of anti-racism in our workplaces.

**Community book partnership** To support the secondary schools we partner with in Newham as part of the firm's school mentoring programme, we designed a special initiative to provide young people with access to books that are diverse and representative of our society and community. We will be donating over 70 different book titles to the libraries of three schools.

# Benchmarking our progress

## The Race Fairness Commitment (RFC)

In July 2020, Macfarlanes was one of 17 initial law firm signatories to the **RFC**. The RFC is data driven and commits us to measuring things like "application to interview" and "interview to offer" rates for different ethnic groups, as well as monitoring how people from different ethnic groups progress through the firm.

While we track much of the required data already – for example we published our ethnicity pay gap earlier this year – the RFC will help us bring this together into a more comprehensive picture and so identify tangible steps to increasing the number of black and minority ethnic (BME) fee earners across the firm and in senior business services roles. The RFC requires us to monitor this data on an annual basis and the first report is scheduled for July 2021.

rare

RACE FAIRNESS COMMITMENT

## Investing in Ethnicity awards

For a second year, Macfarlanes was named a top ten “outstanding employer” by Investing in Ethnicity (IE). This award is derived from ranking the organisations that complete IE's Maturity Matrix - a detailed set of actions that IE recommends employers should undertake to drive the ethnicity agenda.

Our REACH network also made the top 10 shortlist in the “network group” category. This is awarded to those staff networks who have gone above and beyond in helping to impact positively the BME agenda within their workplace. [View the full shortlist](#) for all categories.



## Our staff networks

Our four staff networks provide an important platform through which different groups are able to have a voice - to express their views and offer a diverse range of perspectives.

Each network has a set of mission statements and objectives that align with the firm's wider diversity and inclusion strategy and a dedicated steering group comprising individuals from across the firm including partner and senior business services champions.

# REACH (Race, Ethnicity and Cultural Heritage)

In 2020, our BME & friends network was renamed REACH. Watch the video to hear from senior counsel Aalia Datoos about how the REACH network adapted to a virtual world.



The REACH network hosted educational events throughout 2020 to mark cultural and religious festivals, open to everyone at the firm.

- Just before lockdown 1.0, we managed to celebrate **Purim** (a Jewish festival). Attendees sampled traditional Jewish food such as hamantaschen cookies.
- **Ramadan** is a month of fasting which is observed by Muslims around the world. Ramadan was very different in 2020 due to lockdown and we raised awareness of this by sharing the stories of Muslims across the firm who were fasting during this month.
- **Eid** is a religious festival which marks the end of Ramadan and we celebrated by hosting a virtual "Come dine with me" cooking event.
- In celebration of **Diwali**, people from across the firm coloured in traditional Rangoli patterns and took part in a vibrant Bollywood/Bhangra dance class!
- For **Thanksgiving**, we hosted a second cooking event where people were tasked with cooking the ultimate burger or cookie!

# Balance

During 2020, the Balance network has been involved in a number of initiatives to support a work-life balance for all.

The network has contributed to the firm's response to Covid-19, in developing an internal intranet page featuring resources on how to manage a work-life balance during lockdown and also to the development of a new agile working policy, which sets out new ways of working post-Covid.

This network has also supported the continued enhancement of our parental leave support including the launch of a Working Families hub; extending 1:2:1 parental transition coaching to all staff who take more than three months parental leave, publishing shared parental leave stories and the creation of a new Parental Leave network formed of people who have come back after parental leave and who are willing to support other returners by sharing their experiences and being a buddy over the next 12 months.

The firm also provides all staff with six firm-funded emergency care sessions per year for adult, eldercare and childcare for when other arrangements break down.

## **International Women's Day**

Every year the Balance network marks International Women's Day. In collaboration with "Women Lawyers and Mothers" we hosted a workshop on the power of authenticity, delivered by Hannah Beko and Somaya Ouazanni. Together with our IT team, we ran an IT work fair for girls in secondary schools across London and we welcomed back some of our new parents on parental leave and their babies for a group keeping in touch (KIT) day.

# DAWN

## **A focus on neurodiversity**

Our DAWN network had a particular focus on neurodiversity in 2020 and has worked with the HR team to enhance the support offered at the firm and to develop some guidelines.

## **Living with long term conditions: a panel discussion**

To mark Disability Awareness Day, we hosted a lunchtime panel event featuring two external guests and members of our DAWN network. The panellists spoke about their experiences of living with long term health conditions and shared how they navigate the world of work. It was an open discussion and provided an insight into what it is like to live and work with a long term condition and how to best to support colleagues, family and friends.

## **Business Disability Forum**

In September 2020, the firm became a member of the **Business Disability Forum** (BDF) which aims to improve the experiences of those with disabilities by creating a link between businesses, disabled people and government. The BDF provides advice, training and resources to help us develop the best possible approach to supporting our people, our clients and our contacts who have short or long term conditions or disabilities. Further, this year the firm gained Level 1: Disability Confident employer status.



# Pride

In 2020, our LGBT & friends network became Pride. The Pride network has marked several events throughout the year to raise awareness of LGBT+ matters.

A focus for 2020 was the importance of allyship. During **LGBT+ History Month** in February, we hosted weekly stalls in our kitchen area for staff members to read our ally commitments, sign up to be an ally and collect a rainbow coloured lanyard. We also ran a digital campaign featuring members of the Pride network speaking about their LGBT+ heroes.

To mark **Pride**, we invited an art historian from the Tate Modern to deliver a virtual lecture exploring the legacy and impact of Andy Warhol through the decades. He discussed highlights from the recent Warhol exhibition at the Tate and focused on Warhol as a LGBT+ artist and his relationship with the LGBT+ community in New York from the 1960s through to the 1980s. Members of our Pride network also hosted a virtual quiz night.

**Trans Awareness Week** (TAW) is a week in November to help raise visibility of transgender and gender non-confirming people and address the issues the community face. To mark TAW 2020, we launched a new transitioning policy and site dedicated to our Pride network. As a starting point, we shared a range of resources relating to trans issues. Going forwards, this site will act as a central hub for all Pride network related information.

## LGBT+ history month

Together with the REACH network, we are looking forward to welcoming Mohsin Zaidi for LGBT+ history month. Mohsin is a London-based barrister and author. His first book, *A Dutiful Boy* and published in 2020 is about growing up gay in a Muslim household in Britain.

# Social mobility

We are proud to have been named one of the Social Mobility Foundation's top 75 employers for 2020.

We are encouraged that we have continued to move up the rankings of the Social Mobility Employer Index each year since it was launched in 2017. The Index measures employers on the actions they are taking to improve social mobility in the workplace. Social mobility will continue to be a focus for Macfarlanes in 2021.

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M O B I L I T Y  
F \_ U N D A T I O N

upReach

The graduate recruitment team has finished hiring for the September 2022/ March 2023 trainee cohort:  
36% of the intake are BME;  
66% are female; and  
36% are from a socially mobile backgrounds.

We partner with the social mobility charity upReach to support undergraduates from less-advantaged backgrounds access and sustain top graduate jobs.

In Autumn 2020, our graduate recruitment team arranged two virtual insight events in collaboration with upReach. We welcomed over 100 upReach members (also known as 'associates') to the firm for an afternoon of workshops, including practice area talks, application advice and preparation, and networking. Additionally, we have arranged bespoke work experience for 10 selected upReach members, where they will have a chance to continue their journey with us. The work experience will provide them with the opportunity to shadow some of our trainees, network with our employees, and gain further insight into life at a City law firm.

## EAGLES programme

The “Eagles” programme is a flagship social mobility programme which the charity East London Business Alliance established 15 years ago in response to record levels of underemployment in East London.

The aim of Eagles is to identify and develop exceptional talent that has been overlooked, often because of background, and to encourage businesses to seek new talent in places they would not normally look. The programme provides recent East London graduates with pre-placement training and the opportunity to secure a paid internship within the CSR and D&I teams of City companies.

Macfarlanes joined the Eagles scheme in January 2020.

Read [Ajmin Haque's](#) experience of being our first Eagle.



The success rate of the Eagles programme is very high: 96% of the young people who complete the programme go on to find graduate level jobs in the City, and have continued to progress their careers within the CSR and D&I sectors.

Inclusion and CSR Manager, [Uma Akther](#), was an Eagle in 2013 and shares her career story.



[Farzana Begum](#) was an Eagle in 2017 and was recently promoted to Senior Inclusion and CSR Executive.

# Section 3

Corporate Social Responsibility

# Corporate social responsibility (CSR)

Macfarlanes' CSR programme makes use of our skills and time to support disadvantaged communities, through the provision of practical help and financial support.

Our CSR Committee, comprising 20 staff across the firm, champions the four key areas of focus.



Increasing access to  
justice

Supporting opportunity



Charity partnerships  
and volunteering

Sustainable business



# Increasing access to justice

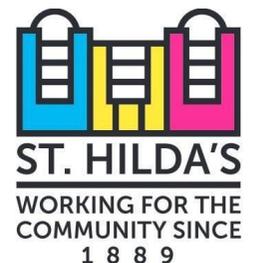
Through our legal pro bono work we are able to help non-profit organisations and individuals who may not otherwise have access to legal services. In 2020, our volunteers spent 3,506 hours on legal pro bono, equating to £1,656,260.

## Refugee Law Clinic

In 2020 we launched the Refugee Law Clinic (RLC). We signed up as a founding partner at a time when asylum seekers needed help more than ever, due to the uncertainty associated with Covid-19. The RLC is a collaborative effort, being managed by University of London, Macfarlanes and Clifford Chance. The clinic enables asylum seekers to put forward fresh claims for asylum on the basis of important new factors e.g. additional evidence coming to light or home country developments. A full training programme was delivered to all volunteers virtually over the summer. So far, 18 associates from Macfarlanes have signed up to support with this programme and have already spent 404 hours on nine cases.

## St Hilda's Legal Clinic

In the autumn of 2020 we re-opened our legal clinic at St Hilda's East community centre, which is run in collaboration with LawWorks and BPP law school. Previously a face-to-face clinic, we were forced to pause the service during lockdown 1.0. We revised our operations and have been running the clinic successfully in a virtual capacity since then. The clinic enables us to support disadvantaged clients with non-contentious matters and a large majority of the cases taken on in recent months cover employment law, specifically relating to furlough and redundancies as a result of Covid-19. We have helped 33 clients, volunteering 494 hours, equating to £174,700. Hear about Victoria Braid's experience of volunteering at the clinic as a new trainee.



# Supporting opportunity

## Newham schools mentoring programme

Volunteers from Macfarlanes have been mentoring secondary school students from the Newham borough for 20 years. Every year 40 Macfarlanes' mentors support 40 Year 10 students across three secondary schools with support from 15billionebp (the Education Business Partnership for Newham).

Newham has one of the highest rates of deprivation in England. Data from 2019 shows that 25% of children under 16 in Newham live in low income households. The average figure for London is 17% and nationally it is 18%. Our mentors provide the students with an opportunity to broaden their horizons as well as offering careers advice, skills support and boosting their confidence.

Covid-19 meant that we had to deliver the majority of the sessions in 2020 virtually, over Zoom. Though there were some technical difficulties, it was great to be able to support the students through these particularly challenging circumstances and the mentees gave some excellent feedback about this support.



## Helping the homeless into employment

During our charity partnership with New Horizon Youth Centre (NHYC), a vital support network for 16-24 year olds experiencing homelessness, we established a new employability programme. NHYC has an employability team who work with the housing team to help young people find a stable home and job opportunities. These are critical steps to helping a young person rebuild their lives, often after very traumatic experiences. It can take months of commitment from that young person in order to be considered work-ready by NHYC. At this point, Macfarlanes provides interview advice and practise and support to help them develop their confidence. The firm also provides six-month work placements, on the London Living Wage, as well as ongoing advice and support. We have supported one person through this scheme in 2020 and we will commence the next round once the lockdown restrictions have eased.



# Charity partnerships

## New Horizon Youth Centre (NHYC)



**We had a very successful partnership with NHYC during 2019/2020, raising over £115,000.**

The funds enabled NHYC to:

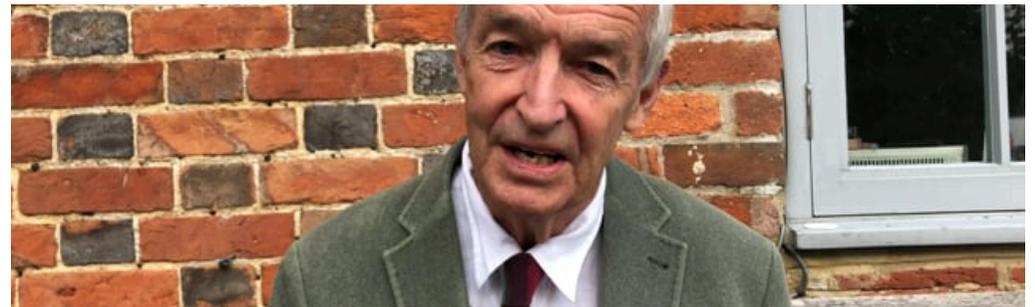
- continue to provide ongoing support to the young people who rely on its services and have nowhere else to turn;
- help pay for young people to access emergency accommodation at the peak of the virus; and
- provide more “one-stop shop” services at the day centre in Kings Cross.

Here is a special message from the patron of NHYC, Jon Snow.

Due to the pandemic our usual fundraisers had to become virtual but it did not stop us putting on some great events and raising a record breaking amount for NHYC.

Volunteers from Macfarlanes used their community days to visit the centre and over the course of our partnership, delivered hot cooked lunches to over 200 young people. Some of our clients even got involved too.

Our annual fundraiser, The Macs Tri, took place with teams running, cycling and rowing from their own homes. We marked the end of the partnership on City Giving Day in September with a lunch and learn session with the CEO of NHYC, Phil Kerry.



# The Trussell Trust and Harold Hill Foodbank

The Trussell Trust and Harold Hill Foodbank are our charity partners for 2020/2021. The Trussell Trust is a nationwide network of food banks, which provide emergency food and support to people locked in poverty, and campaigns for change to end the need for food banks in the UK. Many of their service users are referred by advice agencies, GPs, social services and schools. There are more than 1,200 food bank centres in the network.

Fifty percent of the funds we raise over the course of the year will be used to establish a debt centre at Harold Hill Foodbank in East London. As our charity partner, Macfarlanes helped senior secretary Ruth Reeves and her husband Mark, to set up Harold Hill foodbank in 2011.

To kick start our fundraising over the festive period, we supported the **Hunger Free Future** campaign.

- During December and January, we raised a total of £65,260, which included staff donations, matching from the firm and team fundraising. This amount will pay for 3,263 three-day emergency food parcels.
- Many staff used a community day as well - volunteering 158 hours at local food banks during this period alone.



# Sustainable business

**Sustainability, and environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues have never been more important to Macfarlanes or our clients.**

The firm is fully committed to reducing the negative environmental impact of our business operations and the continual improvement in our environmental performance to make to a more sustainable world. In 2021 our environment committee intends to set ambitious quantified carbon reduction targets and engage the whole firm, and its stakeholders and clients, in the firm's sustainability journey.



There has been a positive impact to remote working in the increased use of DocuSign, saving paper equivalent to 61 trees.



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Our environment committee hosted a webinar in which they set out the strategy and the ambitious new **environment policy**, which includes:

- improving energy efficiency of our premises and operations;
- striving to reduce, reuse and recycle all aspects of our waste wherever possible;
- business travel - exploring and promoting low carbon modes of transport where travel is unavoidable;
- increasing plants and greenery in and around our premises to contribute to the improvement of urban air quality and provide habitats for local insects;
- commissioning regular carbon footprint reports to understand the sources of our carbon emissions; and
- pursuing options for offsetting any greenhouse gas emissions that cannot be reduced.

Thank you for reading

# Inclusion and CSR review 2020–21

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