

Corporate Social Responsibility

We are committed to good practice and ethical behaviour, and we recognise that we have responsibilities to all stakeholders. We regularly review our employee, ethical and environmental policies and improve them where appropriate.

Framework

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) for Care at Home Services (South East) Ltd is about how we align our activities with the expectations of our stakeholders in relation to our economic, social and environmental impacts. Our stakeholders include local authorities and private service users, as well as our employees, suppliers, communities and society as a whole.

The CSR policy covers operations at our main head office in Bexhill on Sea, and our branches in Hastings, Tunbridge Wells and Crowborough.

Daniel McDowell is the Director with specific responsibility for CSR matters. The Board receives regular updates on CSR policies and reviews recommended changes.

Business ethics

Care at Home Services maintain internal controls adequate to ensure standards are met, and where possible, exceed all relevant legal requirements.

Care at Home Services endeavours to behave with honesty, integrity and act fairly and ethically in its relationships and dealings with its suppliers, customers and other stakeholders and extends its own values to relationships with these parties, working only with companies that uphold high standards of ethical conduct and fair practices.

The Company's Staff manual details Care at Home Services's approach to these matters and a comprehensive section on whistle blowing encourages employees to report any concerns and provides means for them to do so with anonymity.

Summaries of key policies follow:

Equal opportunities policy

Care at Home Services is committed to achieving equal opportunities for all its employment policies, procedures and practices.

The Company respects employee human rights and dignity and recognises the advantages of a diverse workforce. Care at Home Services does not tolerate any harassment of, or discrimination against,

employees or potential employees, irrespective of their race, creed, colour, sexual orientation, nationality, ethnic origin, religion, disability, age, gender or marital status.

Employment of people with disabilities

Care at Home Services makes every effort to ensure that disabled employees are treated fairly and without prejudice.

Job applicants with disabilities have an equal opportunity to be selected for employment, and disabled employees have an equal opportunity to be selected for promotion and receive training to aid their career development.

Family friendly employment policies

Care at Home Services's maternity and paternity leave policies meet the statutory minimum standards.

Flexible approaches to returning to work after maternity leave, including part-time and non-standard hours of work, are adopted where viable. We also offer care staff the opportunity of selecting their working hours, and patterns of work to fit in with existing domestic arrangements.

Employee training and development

Care at Home Services considers continuous learning to be one of its core Company values and training is a key constituent of the employee appraisal process.

The Company has a dedicated external training team which, together with the management team, is responsible for sourcing appropriate employee training across all sites.

Care at Home Services aim to provide a safe, fulfilling and rewarding career for all our employees

Employee communication and involvement

Management acknowledges the importance of internal communication, especially in a Company with multiple branches.

Briefing and consultative procedures exist throughout the Group at management level to keep managers and their employees informed of general business issues and other matters of interest.

Regular staff meetings, memos and bi-annual newsletters are used both to communicate Company matters to employees and to elicit questions, feedback and requests.

Procurement

Given the nature of the services that we provide and the fact that people are the company's largest expense, the procurement of other supplies such as stationery and medical supplies is axiomatically a smaller proportion of outgoings.

However, we aim to use local companies for supplies wherever possible and have a company policy of recycling printer cartridges and other supplies as appropriate.

Health and safety

Given the nature of our services, Health and Safety is a priority within the Company's work spaces. Risk assessments are undertaken at all service user's houses, and every service user also is subject to a manual handling risk assessment.

The Company's Health and Safety Manual, Policies and Procedures are issued to all employees on joining the Company, and induction training for all staff, reinforces specific health & safety training.

Environment

Care at Home Services' offices all occupy leased parts of larger buildings and therefore the Company has no control of overall building emissions, energy usage or waste. However, the company seeks to reduce usage by encouraging employees to turn off equipment and lights outside of normal office hours, and where possible minimise usage during working hours. In essence we encourage all staff to develop a sustainable approach to their work and make the most efficient and effective use of all resources.

Care at Home Services does encourage office staff to use sustainable modes of transport to commute to work. We aim to deploy carers in tight geographical areas to minimise travel and we are able to offer positions to a number of carers who can walk their 'round' of calls. However due to the nature of the care work and the requirement to provide care in unsocial hours and in rural areas, it remains a challenge to move away from the traditional need for carers with car transport, as public transport and bikes cannot sustain the care provision as a whole, and would undoubtedly impede efficiency or effectiveness.

Political and charitable donations

Care at Home Services's policy is that it does not donate money, services or facilities to political parties.

Care at Home Services strives to work with charities and organisations that are either in some way local, or of interest to Care at Home Services employees.

In 2008 and 2009 Care at Home Services donated £5000 to the local Charity 'Homecall' which provides support services to the partially sighted in Bexhill. Support for this charity will be ongoing, however, in

2010 we are planning to introduce an annual ballot for employees to select charities to sponsor for each forthcoming year.

Additionally in 2009, the Company sponsored the 'Carer of the Year Award' at both the Bexhill Achievers' Awards and Hastings Achievers' Awards held locally.

We will encourage and enable staff who wish to undertake voluntary activities to do so and give them the time and opportunity to participate in charitable events. If required, reasonable use of Care at Home Services time and facilities will be allowed.

Quality Assurance

An annual review of all Company policies is undertaken as part of our statutory obligations under the Care Standards Act, and in accordance with the guidance issued by our regulatory body, the Care Quality Commission.

This annual review will be undertaken by the director responsible for CSR matters, and this policy will be reviewed and updated accordingly.