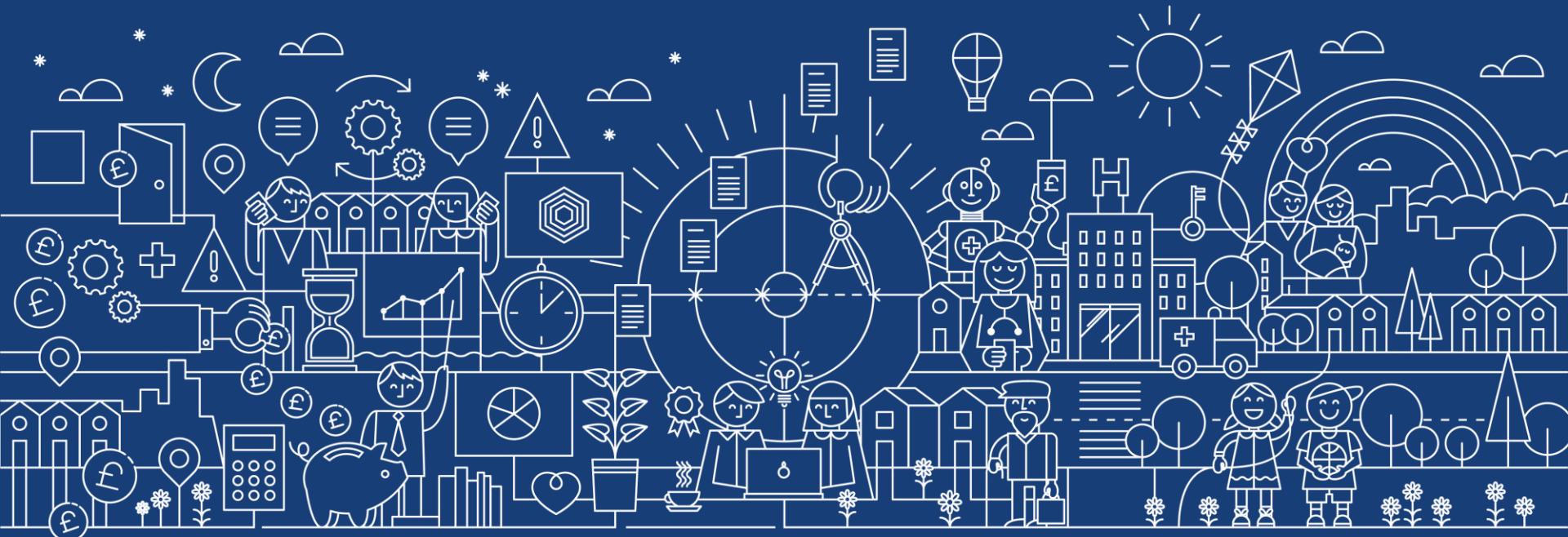


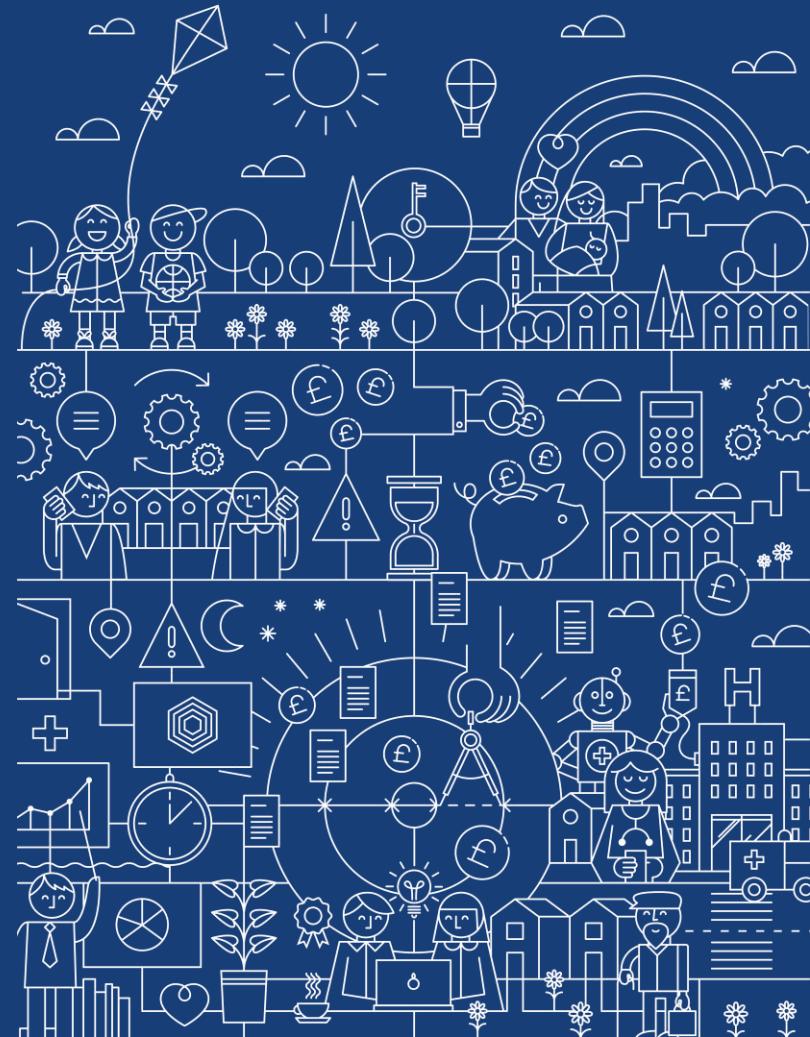
MCA Consulting Excellence

IMPOWER's Commitments

April 2022



As a proud MCA member and signatory to Consulting Excellence, IMPOWER adopt the twelve principles of the scheme through our codes of practice, and day-to-day operations. Our commitments, grouped under the four themes of Consulting Excellence, are set out in this document.



Ethical Behaviour

1. We are responsible and good citizens.

IMPOWER's contribution to a fairer and more compassionate society is to increase the quality of citizens' lives by making meaningful and measurable improvements to local public services, making the best use of the public pound and with a particular focus on the most vulnerable in our communities.

- Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Environmental, Social & Governance (ESG) has an explicit role within our company strategy; we believe it enables us to increase our social impact, whilst facilitating our learning and the development of our staff. This applies at two levels - how we operate on a day to day basis as well and in our strategic approach supported by specific initiatives.
- We have surveyed staff and held focus groups to understand how we can develop and embed our approach to CSR as we continue to grow, in a way that is integral to our strategy. 87% of respondents agreed that CSR is integral to our reputation and growth. Building on this and wider research we developed our ESG strategy, setting out how we would integrate it into everything we do, shaping responsibilities and ensuring that ethical considerations are embedded in decision making.
- We have articulated how we lead on ESG within our roles and have 'CSR champions' who support staff in delivering and capturing the impact of CSR activity. We have considerably augmented how we deliver social value when working with our clients.
- IMPOWER gives staff two paid days each year for CSR activity; this ranges from holding Trustee positions with charities to tutoring and sharing our skills with Voluntary and Community Organisations.

Ethical Behaviour

1. *We are responsible and good citizens. Continued...*

- In shaping our client partnerships we consistently see opportunities for CSR, including delivering skills training to local VCS organisations or shaping secondments with our clients.
- As a company we are committed to supporting the charitable sector. As examples we participate in the Give as You Earn Scheme, raise funds through events such as alternative Secret Santa and we invite employees to speak about causes they are passionate about at company events.
- We make ethical choices wherever we can, e.g. we use environmentally friendly cleaning products, provide bins for recycling, and source ethical gifts for our wellbeing initiatives.
- Specifically on climate, we have committed to Net Zero by 2030 and are currently baselining our carbon footprint to ensure we can measure progress. Reflecting our need to travel, we have signed-up to offset our carbon impact through our travel platform provider.

Ethical Behaviour

2. We conduct our business ethically.

- We only bid for work that we have the capacity and capability to deliver.
- We price our work based on the number of days we think it will actually take to deliver it; we do not add in additional days to generate extra profit.
- We are always transparent regarding how our work is scoped and costed.
- We are honest with our customers about whether we think their desired outcomes are achievable.
- Our approach is founded upon sustainability, leaving the client with increased capability and more resilient. Skills transfer is explicit in our planning.
- We pay our subcontractors and associates promptly, and do not withhold payment until we have received payment from the client.
- We pay our suppliers promptly.
- Our staff are all paid above the London Living Wage.
- Where mistakes are made (e.g. incorrect invoicing), we take steps to ensure that errors are identified and corrected quickly.

Ethical Behaviour

3. *We foster an ethical culture.*

- We care about outcomes for citizens and believe that better outcomes can cost less.
- Our 'In-flight' review process actively engages our clients in a conversation about the behaviour of our teams, including how they demonstrate integrity.
- Our weekly delivery-focused meeting provides a forum to explore any ethical challenges and client issues to ensure senior oversight and engagement. Each delivery team submits reports into this forum that highlights any areas where difficult decisions are required or integrity comes into play.
- We provide transparent platforms to challenge senior leaders and our colleagues. IMPOWER 'People Fridays' are one such example of a structured opportunity to do this. More informally, our senior team all operate an 'open door' policy and welcome suggestions on how things can be improved.
- We have a Whistleblowing Policy which sets out that staff members raising genuine concerns will not under any circumstances be subjected to any form of detriment or disadvantage as a result of having raised their concerns.
- Our promotion process for consultants is transparent and open to all staff.
- We encourage staff to record their time honestly, and not 'hide' time to distort project performance.
- In 2021 we introduced an online employee engagement system to ensure we can regularly and anonymously check in with our people and take action based on their feedback.

Client Service and Value

4. We provide excellent consulting services which deliver the outcomes clients seek and need.

Complex social problems cannot be effectively addressed through narrow framing, a focus on single entities, linear processes or with a bias toward financial measures. By definition, collaboration is fundamental to creating better and more innovative solutions to complex problems. Collaboration, teamwork and developing strong relationships are our starting point.

- EDGEWORK® is our unique approach to understanding and delivering change in complex systems. We developed this, in consultation with our clients, because we recognise that such work requires a different mindset, an ability to work with people – not just datasets – alongside unique methods and tools.
- c80% of our work is repeat business, evidencing that our clients are happy with the work we do and the outcomes we deliver.
- We carry out 'In-flight' reviews to ensure the quality of our work, flag any risks to successful delivery and maintain a focus on achieving outcomes.
- All of our projects involve coproducing with client staff; not only does this ensure better outcomes but it also means we can transfer skills and knowledge to local staff to ensure sustainability.
- Our project planning approach ('Storyboarding') means investing time in detailed planning and scoping to ensure that outcomes can be achieved within the project timescales.
- We focus on the outcomes and value that our clients are trying to achieve. We will challenge their specification if we feel it is not the best solution - even if that means a reduced role for IMPOWER.

Client Service and Value

5. We are transparent with clients and respond to their concerns.

We work with integrity to improve quality of life. Respect for all people – local citizens, clients, partners and colleagues – in ways that they themselves understand and value is therefore essential.

- Where data or resources provided to us are insufficient to deliver the project outputs, we flag this to the client and look to re-scope the project to take this into account.
- Our 'In-flight' reviews give our clients the opportunity to raise any concerns with a member of IMPOWER's leadership team. The review involves a thorough assessment of risk across the project and provides an opportunity for further mitigating actions to be undertaken.
- Our contracts include clear processes for change management; we recognise that client needs change over time and we have processes to ensure that we can capture and respond to these in a flexible way.
- Our contracts stipulate the need for regular and on-going meetings with project sponsors to ensure their views are regularly captured and reflected in the work undertaken.
- Our focus has shifted to building long-standing delivery partnerships with our clients, acting as their trusted advisors on a wide range of complex challenges and offering greater value, insights and economies of scale over the longer-term.

Client Service and Value

6. We always strive to improve the value we can deliver to our clients.

We are committed to demonstrating our impact, leadership and professionalism with clients and colleagues alike. We hold ourselves and each other accountable for our commitments, making clear recommendations and decisions, and communicating them effectively.

- We employ empathetic and experienced people who are passionate about transforming public services.
- We invest time in developing new insights, tools and propositions that enable our clients to deliver sustainable change.
- We are committed to demonstrating impact from the work we do with our clients. We help them measure the improvements in outcomes, financial performance, organisational resilience and system confidence that result from the interventions we deliver together.
- All of our projects are subject to a 'Lessons Learned Review' so that we can capture successes, and areas for improvement, and ensure that these are fed back in to how we scope and deliver future work.
- Coproduced with our network, IMPOWER Shared Learning Events foster sector collaboration, supporting knowledge-transfer across organisational boundaries.

Professional Development

7. We undertake training and professional development planning each year.

Through our projects, we create a discovery mindset to continuously uncover insights about human behaviour, complex systems and public service outcomes. We learn from our successes and mistakes, and we share these insights so that our teams draw from best practice. We encourage innovation, and we share our ideas and insights externally to influence public debates and national decisions.

- Training and education around creating a trust culture and greater autonomy of our people which feeds in to the transparent and fair culture that we want to build on.
- We recognise that all functions contribute to the success of the business – recognising the strength of our People/ IT /Finance function of supporting our people and therefore the clients.
- We prepare an annual training and development plan based upon the assessed skills gaps and needs of the business and our clients, as well as individuals' development plans. IMPOWER allocates all employees with a Performance Manager and Team Leader to help effectively support them in the bi-annual appraisal process and provide constructive feedback.
- For the first time in our organisation's history, we have appointed a Chief People Officer. This is a reflection of our growth, whilst also recognising the strategic importance of developing and supporting our staff.
- We have rejuvenated our Core Consulting training for new starters in our business and created a plan for developing people management skills, coaching and mentoring in 2022.
- For the first time, we will be supporting our experienced professionals towards gaining Chartered Management Consultancy status during 2022.

Professional Development

8. We promote strong core consulting capabilities and specialisms in our consultants and teams.

We believe that public services should promote people's independence, empowering them to help themselves with better information and support. Our teams empower our clients to make difficult choices that will improve outcomes. We empower our consultants and teams through training, development, good management and clear leadership.

- Productive and cohesive team working is fostered at IMPOWER with the provision of team and support networks, and professional development around team behaviour.
- We have renewed our onboarding process for new starters, including the introduction of a buddy scheme, a 'Netflix' group for new starter training and networking and a thorough schedule of meetings, training, networking and shadowing for our new starters. We have also rejuvenated our Core Consulting training.
- We are planning the recruitment of our first learning specialist who will align our consultancy training with MCA/ CMI standards, to provide visible professional development to our consultants.
- IMPOWER encourage employees to pursue activities and events which enable them to increase their specialist knowledge and gain industry insight.
- We are focussed on behaviours, from the recruitment phase where we recruit on this basis, through to the promotion process.
- We put provisions in place to support our people and strengthen both their personal and professional resilience; this ranges from subject matter or setting-specific training, to Mental Health First Aid.

Professional Development

9. We support our employees' career progression, professional development and welfare.

- IMPOWER welcomes all requests, where appropriate, for flexible and alternative ways of working. During the pandemic we actively encouraged flexible working to support welfare and established a range of support forums. This work continues as we increasingly support hybrid ways of working and flexible working patterns.
- All staff are encouraged to provide feedback on our culture and working practices which we are committed to using as a base for continuous improvement.
- We strongly believe in supporting our staff with families and ensuring that parents feel able to maintain a career in the consultancy industry. To this end, in 2021 we significantly enhanced our maternity, paternity and adoption provision to above-industry-average levels.
- As a company we champion our comprehensive competency framework and use this as a consistent base for measuring performance.
- Consultants are encouraged to honestly reflect upon their performance, both with regards to specific project work and the overall picture and highlight any areas for development.
- We work with each employee to identify their strengths and weaknesses, and codesign bespoke development plans that stretch them in their weaker areas and help them finesse their areas of strength.
- We implemented a range of initiatives to support staff through the pandemic, focused on wellbeing and learning how to adjust to remote working. Many of these are now business-as-usual.

Commitment to Diversity & Inclusion

10. We respect & embrace diversity & inclusion, & understand the importance & positive benefit of people from different backgrounds working for our companies & our clients.

- Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) has a clear place in our company strategy and our approach in this area continues to be strengthened. As an organisation we have collectively developed the following D&I Charter that reflects how we work:
 - We are committed to ensuring that our culture prioritises D&I; this is the right thing to do. It will also ensure our client work is more creative, more insightful and of higher quality.
 - We have adopted a learning mindset, with an ongoing commitment to improving our understanding of colleagues, clients and the communities we work with.
 - We are committed to creating an environment that enables employees to bring their whole selves to work and allows them to be vulnerable, recognising the strength in that.
 - Senior leaders model a ‘speak up’ culture to ensure people know they will be listened to.
- During 2021 we engaged staff extensively on D&I, through a survey and forums. This has helped us to shape and implement a range of ways we can strengthen D&I.
- We have an assigned Director Lead for D&I as well as a D&I ‘champion’ at each grade to act as a advocate for D&I issues, but to also support other staff members on related matters and act as a reference group for D&I considerations.
- We have overhauled our website to be more representative of ourselves, the organisations we work with and their communities.

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Continued...

- In many areas our client work helps remove bias from client approaches, thereby supporting D&I e.g. an assessment framework based on need for Children in Care and those with High Needs, and the listening tools that support clients to remove bias from resident feedback (e.g. identifying differential outcomes achieved for vulnerable cohorts and supporting the organisation to train staff to address this).
- We are looking ahead to refining our Inventive Methods (key consulting tools and approaches) to support greater inclusion in our engagement with clients and ensure the D&I benefits are articulated.

Commitment to Diversity & Inclusion

11. We recruit & retain people from a diverse talent pool & strive to build cultures where difference is valued, respected & celebrated at all levels. Furthermore we are committed to developing diverse future leaders & ensuring their progression in the industry.

Increasing our diversity is a strategic priority for IMPOWER.

- As a company, we recognise that women are currently underrepresented at senior levels and have proactively sought to address our gender imbalance.
- In the past year, we have promoted 25% of our workforce internally. 76% of those promoted are women, 12% from a global majority background. We have created a pipeline of nearly 80% women who we will be supporting to grow into senior roles in the business in 2022/23.
- Last year we made the investment decision to roll-out specific training to all IMPOWER's women throughout FY21 to support them to thrive. This year we will be focussing training on inclusion, belonging and allyship.
- We are building an inclusive culture, with Directors, senior staff and D&I 'champions' actively role modelling the behaviours that we want to make the norm.
- We have established monthly forums as a safe space to explore topics in relation to D&I. We also encourage participation in relevant industry forums/ webinars e.g. Women in Consulting run by the MCA.
- We celebrate diversity through recognition of events such as International Women's Day, Black History Month and their application to our work.
- We support colleagues to work effectively when they have a specific need e.g. Access to Work assessments for colleagues with Dyslexia, and financial support for associated coaching and support.

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- We actively look to recruit from more diverse backgrounds, including the use of diversity job boards, anonymous CVs, and using diversity as a selection criteria for our recruitment partners. We also review the wording of our job adverts to ensure a lack of gender bias.
- A key ongoing priority is the refinement of onboarding and training processes to ensure the retention of staff from diverse backgrounds.

Commitment to Diversity & Inclusion

12. We support industry efforts to improve progress on diversity & inclusion, implementing best practice & monitoring the diversity of the consultancy sector workforce over time. This includes encouraging the collection of data to assess the effectiveness of D&I policies & participating in the MCA annual report.

- In previous years we have surveyed the entire business, with a high (and highly representative) completion rate. This helped us understand where and how we could improve. We developed and implemented an action plan for immediate changes and have also embedded D&I into our wider activity such as recruitment, to ensure it is at the heart of how we operate.
- In 2022 we are about to start surveying our staff again on D&I, using our new employee engagement tool which will allow us to benchmark against industry standards and set appropriate targets which will be able to report against. This will provide us with the data to create our new D&I strategy, focussing on the most crucial areas for our people and clients.
- We will regularly conduct the survey (at least once every 6 months) to understand progress and highlight areas requiring further focus.
- In responding to the survey we will hold focus group discussions to explore the findings and ways to improve.
- We are currently working with colleges to create a student placement for a young person with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) and we will be working towards the Disability Confident scheme to ensure we are a supportive and welcoming employer for candidates and staff with disabilities.
- We will support the MCA in any way we can to understand progress and impact across the consulting industry.

Contact

IMPOWER Consulting Ltd.
enquiries@impower.co.uk
www.impower.co.uk

