



**UK Responsible  
Business Charter**



# Our Proposed Commitments

Mears wants to be the best possible partner for the UK Government, local councils, for people who live or work in any of our branches and communities we operate in. To get our pledges to the right groups, we have put together a set of draft commitments for consultation and we want to hear back from you about whether we are on the right track.

## **Commitment 1. All listed UK companies should pay the Real Living Wage, and should seek to include fair work principles in their operations**

Companies operating in the United Kingdom need to commit to paying all of their workforce the Real Living Wage.

### **Mears Action**

Mears is committed to pay all staff and regular contracted workers the Real Living Wage and will work with Local Government to enable this to happen wherever this is not the case

- ▶ All employees are paid the Real Living Wage or above
- ▶ We have no inappropriate Zero Hours contracts
- ▶ We take action to close the gender pay gap

We would also welcome discussions on a living hours pledge.

## **Commitment 2. All listed management companies should include resident and tenant representation as part of their scrutiny arrangements and in their service design.**

### **Mears Action**

Our new Independent Customer Scrutiny Board was set up to strengthen tenant rights

for our customers. The Board is chaired independently and is made up of residents and tenants from across our services. The Board will publish its first public and independent report in 2021. We will look at the remit of the Board to see how we can establish specific tenant groupings across the United Kingdom in line with devolved governance arrangements.

Whilst provision of information and consultation to residents and tenants are statutory requirements of management companies, as per the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 and Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002, representation as part of internal arrangements is not. Therefore, at Mears we want to go further by including resident and tenant representation as part of our scrutiny and service design arrangements.

## **Commitment 3. All listed companies working in the United Kingdom should commit to improving the Environmental, Social, Governance and economic wellbeing of the area in which it operates. Especially with those communities that have not had the levels of support of others.**

### **Mears Action**

Many of the areas where we operate have not had adequate levels of funding over many years. We have always believed that our company has a role in addressing this imbalance.

For each Mears employee we deliver on average of over £2500 per FTE of social value per annum. This is decided by using a recognised model to calculate the value to wellbeing.

We will also commit to community benefit requirements for all of our public service contracts, focusing on skills development, training, supporting our supply chains and local SMEs, environmental initiatives, supporting equality and diversity and supporting community and charitable programs and infrastructure.

Any social value commitments should be based on local need rather than using the same measures in every area.

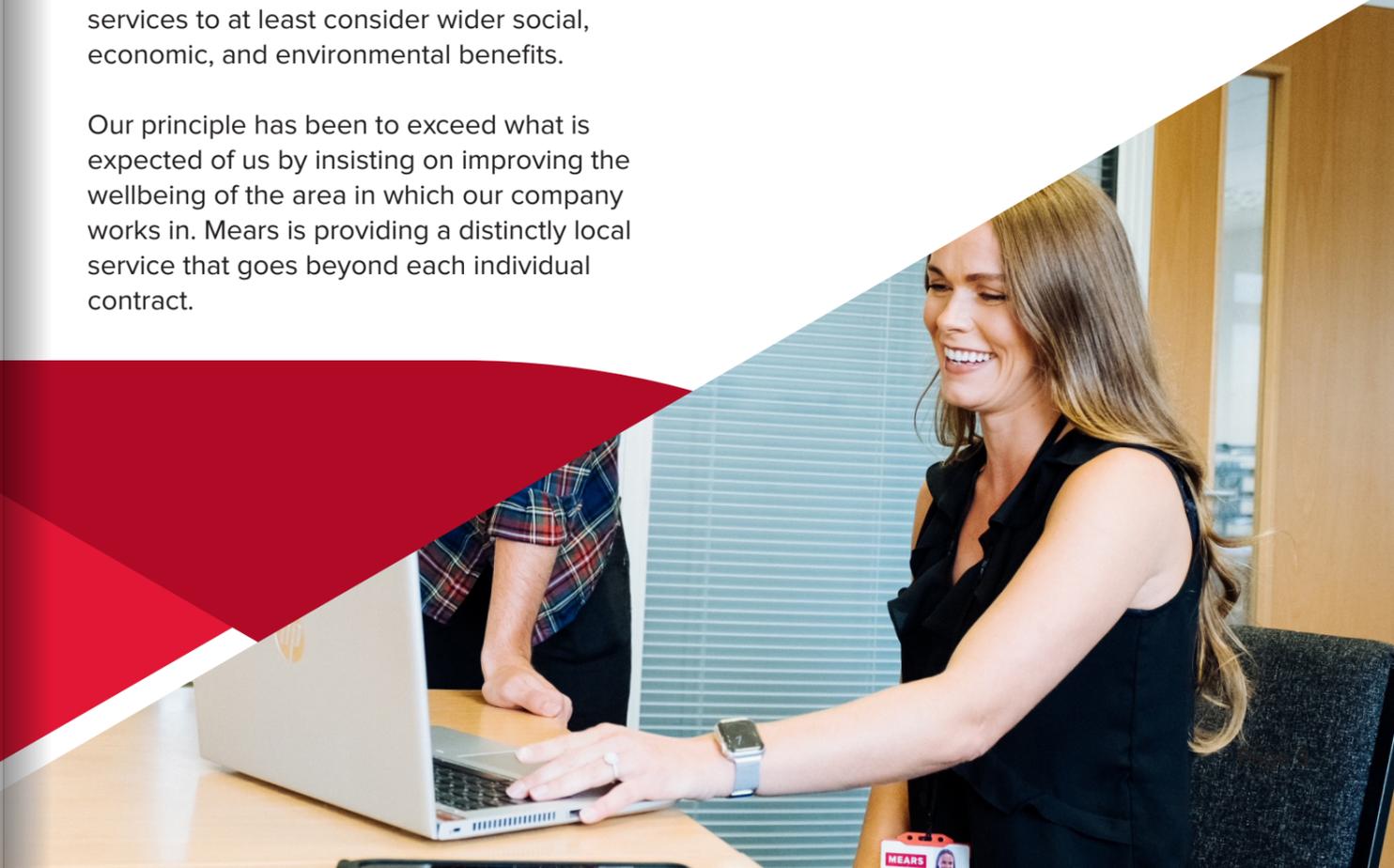
The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 requires those who commission public services to at least consider wider social, economic, and environmental benefits.

Our principle has been to exceed what is expected of us by insisting on improving the wellbeing of the area in which our company works in. Mears is providing a distinctly local service that goes beyond each individual contract.

## **Commitment 4. All listed companies should commit to pay small business on time.**

### **Mears Action**

- ▶ Mears has one of the shortest payment times in the country, but we know that for suppliers it isn't just about speed – it's about ensuring that a payment date is set in stone to protect their cash flow. We commit to paying quickly and when we said we would.
- ▶ We commit to move our business towards payment no later than 30 days; establishing a clear policy on the payment of bills and system for clearing disputes quickly; and signing up to the prompt payment code.
  - We will encourage the involvement of the local supply chain in our projects by seeking to work collaboratively across the UK's housing management sector, and in line with the UK Government's Construction Playbook and other core procurement guidance.
- ▶ We commit to resolving disputes quickly and have a clear policy set out to all sub-contractors.



The most recent changes to the UK's 'Prompt Payment Code', which came into effect in July 2021, included a requirement for signatories to pay 95 percent of invoices from SMEs within 30 days and 95 percent of all invoices within 60 days. The changes also required signatories to recognise a suppliers' right to charge late payment interest and charges if payment is late without justification.

By signing the Code and further committing to pay all businesses no later than 30 days we want to show that we are a supporter of our local supply chain partners.

### **Commitment 5. Listed companies should make it simple, straightforward and easy for local SMEs, social enterprises and supported businesses to access supply chains opportunities.**

#### **Mears Action**

As a strategic partner we also know how difficult it can be for local companies to access large supply chains. We commit to always making it possible for the right local companies and supported businesses to join us as partners and we will provide free safety and service training to our SME partners, as well as support them in other ways where possible.

- ▶ We will also commit to mapping our local supply chain companies and publishing our annual GVA contribution through them on a regional basis.
- ▶ We commit to local spend with all of our procurement where possible.
- ▶ We will hold active recruitment events for local SMEs at regular intervals throughout.
- ▶ We will continue to hold and abide by the principles of ISO44001 – (collaboration in contract management)

The Department for International Trade (DIT) has published its 'Small and medium-sized enterprises action plan 2020 to 2022'.

Within this plan are several principles, one of which regards 'access to opportunities'. This includes collaboration, lean sourcing, Crown Commercial Service agreements, and making it so that suppliers are contractually obliged to publish sub-contracting opportunities above £25k on 'Contracts Finder'.

We are also committed to the provision of free safety and service training to SME partners, mapping local supply chains, encouraging local procurement spend, and recruitment events sees

### **Commitment 6. All listed companies in the United Kingdom should make firm and achievable commitments to support national target of Net-zero emissions by 2050.**

#### **Mears Action**

- ▶ Achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2030 across our operations
- ▶ Achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2045 across our value chain
- ▶ Continue to achieve ISO 14001 (Environmental Management System) certification
- ▶ Continue to divert over 95% of waste from landfill

The Government's 'Net Zero Strategy' published October 2021 includes ending domestic contribution to climate change, reducing emissions across the economy (including in areas such as power, fuel, heat & buildings, waste, and transport), and supporting the transition across the economy (including green investment, green jobs & skills, embedding net zero in governance, and empowering public, business, and local climate action).

### **Commitment 7. Listed companies have a social responsibility to pass on skills to local communities and to take inclusive approach to all workforce matters.**

#### **Mears Action**

Mears is proud of its Social Mobility Index status, again scoring in the Top 75 in the UK, creating opportunities and enabling people to develop new skills in some of the most disadvantaged and marginalised communities. We will take on new apprentices every year and publicise what our annual commitment is.

- ▶ Mears will continue to run its successful local apprenticeship programmes across the UK.
- ▶ Mears will work with BEIS, DfE and relevant organisations in the devolved governments to align activity.
- ▶ We will sign the Young Person's Guarantee in Scotland and Wales, and parts of England which also operate such schemes e.g. Greater Manchester to provide opportunities to train our young people.
- ▶ We will continue to collaborate with local schools and FE colleges to bring on the next generation of skilled operatives
- ▶ We will upskill our workforce, including our apprentices so that they can play their part to move to Net Zero.

We will follow the principles set out in the 'Skills and Post-16 Education Bill', which will include a statutory requirement for employers and colleges to collaborate to develop skills plans that are locally attuned.

### **Commitment 8. Companies should be transparent in their Financial and Business reporting.**

#### **Mears Action**

We will publicise the revenue and profit that we make each year as Group. Mears has, over an extended period, made less than 5% profit from its work with the public services and regularly shares any additional surplus with its clients and through investment in social value. This return for high quality work performed allows us to re-invest in our people, our communities and our technology to deliver ever greater efficiencies and value for money to our client base.

Where we manage properties, our rent should be affordable and will work with the UK Government to give a clear definition of what this means.

We commit to making our company information publicly accessible, opaque corporate control, direct lines of director accountability, and streamlined misconduct and compensation regimes.

### **Commitment 9. Companies should make every effort to make their organisation a great place to work.**

#### **Mears Action**

Mears will annually undertake the Best Companies independent workforce survey with an aim to keeping its position of being in the Top 25 best Companies to work for. We will maintain our absolute commitment to safety and will target as a minimum the annual achievement of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA) Gold Award.

**Commitment 10. Companies should work harder to address equality and diversity and should submit to independent audit of all policies and procedures to enable fair access for all.**

### **Mears Action**

Mears currently holds the Inclusive Culture Pledge accreditation. The Pledge will focus on keeping the equality and diversity conversation alive and progressing our diversity and inclusion agenda and achievements.

We know we need to go further, that's why we have an independent Social and Diversity Impact Board which examines all of our policies to ensure that they are fair.

We commit to improving access and representation across our business to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to gain the skills and support for a career with us.

**Commitment 11. Listed companies should have a balanced board**

Mears will work to secure balanced boards to broaden the range of perspectives and expertise, and ultimately benefit the services and clients we seek to support. We will work to the spirit of the Gender Representation (Scotland) Act and the Partnership for Change commitment.

Boards should take account of the interests not just of shareholders but employees, suppliers and the wider community. To ensure employees' interests are represented at board level, listed companies which supply government should be required either to nominate a director from the workforce, create a formal employee advisory council or assign specific responsibility for employee representation to a designated non-executive director.

We will follow the principles set out in the FTSE Women Leaders review, which aims to increase opportunities for women at the top of Britain's largest companies.

**Commitment 12. Companies should demonstrate or advocate support to defence and the armed forces community, and align their values with the Armed Forces Covenant.**

Mears will support the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme to show support to the armed forces and encourage others to do the same. Mears will work to attain Gold Award status and among its commitments will seek to actively ensure that their workforce is aware of their positive policies towards defence people issues and be an exemplar within their market sector, advocating support to defence people issues to partner organisations, suppliers and customers with tangible positive results.

### **Consultation**

Mears wants to get our business pledges right and they have to be meaningful to the people we serve across the United Kingdom. We are sending this to all public stakeholders, including the Government, local councils across the UK and to any member of the general public who wishes to comment on our proposals.

Please comment on whether we go far enough or whether we have missed anything out of our pledges.

**Please respond via**  
[communications@mearsgroup.co.uk](mailto:communications@mearsgroup.co.uk)

### **About Mears**

Mears are one of the UK's leading housing solutions providers to both the public and private sector. With over 5,500 employees, we work with clients to help develop, fund and implement innovative solutions. We are a highly responsible partner, who is committed to; delivering the highest levels of customer service, keeping our promises, creating a great place to work and tackling issues that matter to people and communities



For more information please contact:

**Daniel Garfield**, *Group Head of PR*

E-mail: [Daniel.Garfield@mearsgroup.co.uk](mailto:Daniel.Garfield@mearsgroup.co.uk)

**MEARS**®