



Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce
CSR Accreditation Application Report

60% Bronze CSR Accreditation

March 2025

Introduction

The Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce (GBCC), with over 210 years of heritage, is a private sector, not-for-profit organisation representing eight regional Chambers. Its mission is simple yet powerful: **to support and grow local businesses**. This mission is underpinned by core values—**Customer, Culture, Community, and Core**—which serve as guiding principles for its activities and internal culture.

GBCC recently relocated to a new premises, which has served as a catalyst to **accelerate its CSR strategy**. This move has provided both opportunity and momentum to embed sustainability and social responsibility at the heart of its operations. Initial progress in colleague engagement, strategic direction, and interdepartmental cooperation has laid strong foundations for long-term CSR integration.

Environment

GBCC has implemented numerous measures to reduce its environmental footprint and operate more sustainably:

- **Energy Efficiency:** Installation of LED lighting, use of coil-based heating and cooling systems, and adoption of energy-efficient white goods (copiers, laptops, mobile phones).
- **Carbon Footprint Monitoring:** Transition from paper to digital documents, adoption of double-sided default printing, and secure paper shredding to reduce waste and storage needs.
- **Smart Working:** Hot-desking and automatic power-down of workstations at night conserve electricity.
- **Eco Supplies & Procurement:** Utilisation of Fair-Trade products, environmentally friendly cleaning supplies, and requesting net-zero statements from suppliers during procurement.
- **Green Travel Initiatives:** Strong encouragement of public transport, cycling, car sharing, and electric taxi use by staff.
- **Waste Reduction:** Focus on bulk buying, collaboration with recycling specialists, use of recycling bins, and active participation in initiatives like Global Recycling Week.
- **Event Sustainability:** Elimination of printed brochures and name tags (saving approximately 10,000 annually), use of digital materials.
- **Re-use and Internal Sharing:** A proposed internal “marketplace” web page for recycling and swapping goods (e.g. dress swaps, repurposed laptops sold to staff).

These initiatives collectively reflect GBCC’s dedication to becoming a **low-waste, low-carbon** organisation that sets a green benchmark within the region.

Workplace

Creating a **supportive, inclusive, and development-oriented** workplace is central to GBCC’s mission:

- **Training & Development:** All staff receive comprehensive induction and ongoing training, including CSR elements. Opportunities for professional development, external training, and educational partnerships are supported.
- **Hybrid & Flexible Work:** Hybrid work policies, performance reviews, and staff surveys ensure ongoing responsiveness to workforce needs.
- **Health & Wellbeing:** Mental health responders are in place, ergonomic interventions (e.g., rising desks), and holistic benefits support occupational wellbeing.

- **Cultural Inclusion:** Respect for religious and national traditions is embedded in policy and practice.
- **Employee Engagement:** Activities such as Lunch & Learn, summer and Christmas events, and recognition programmes (e.g. “above and beyond” awards) nurture a strong team spirit.
- **Collaboration & Communication:** Two annual team away days and quarterly all-team meetings foster alignment and team building.
- **Leadership & Governance:** An ESG group reports directly to the CEO and Board, comprising nine representatives, ensuring high-level CSR accountability.
- **Ethical Procurement:** Development of a sustainable and ethical procurement policy supported by a structured three-year re-tender cycle.
- **Diversity and Inclusion:** HR policies comprehensively address diversity, equal opportunities, parental leave, and fair treatment.

GBCC is committed to developing its people, cultivating inclusion, and maintaining a thriving, values-driven workplace.

Community

The Chambers have a strong and active presence in the Birmingham community, focused on building **economic, educational, and cultural resilience:**

- **Events and Engagement:** GBCC hosts and participates in numerous community initiatives, including the “Growth Through People” programme, which builds leadership and business capability in the region.
- **Support for Education:** The Chamber engages in local educational outreach, offering workplace experience placements to school, college, and university students.
- **Community Representation:** Initiatives such as the **Black Business Collective** reflect GBCC’s commitment to representation and empowerment of underrepresented communities.
- **Inclusive Membership:** Free memberships are offered to charities and social enterprises, supporting over 40 community organisations.
- **Volunteerism:** Staff are encouraged to contribute through two paid volunteering days annually, with directors also serving on local boards and trusts.

This deep, consistent involvement highlights GBCC’s role not only as a business support body but as a **community anchor institution.**

Philanthropy

Philanthropy is an embedded component of GBCC’s culture, shaped and led by staff engagement and local impact:

- **Charitable Fundraising:** Over the past year, GBCC has raised **£56,000 for seven charities**, all nominated by staff. An additional **£10,000** was raised through the annual awards dinner.
- **Direct Staff Contributions:** Colleagues donated **£9,000 and 146 hours** of volunteer service.
- **Institutional Volunteering:** Executive and leadership team members serve actively on boards of local charities and trusts, providing governance and strategic support.
- **Ongoing Support:** Food bank collections and tailored support for vulnerable people are regular features of the Chambers’ annual calendar.

GBCC’s philanthropic efforts are characterised by **deep local roots, inclusive participation, and meaningful impact**, reinforcing their identity as a purpose-led organisation.

Future Planning and Recommendations

The Chambers are committed to enhancing their CSR activities, with a goal of becoming a **regional benchmark for responsible business**. Key areas of focus for future evolution include:

- **Developing and publishing performance data**, including:
 - Carbon footprint metrics
 - Return on investment for sustainability initiatives
 - Training hours per employee
 - Demographic and tenure breakdown of staff
- **Organisational Transparency:**
 - Inclusion of a detailed staff survey
 - Organisational chart
- **Next-Level Innovation:**
 - Full implementation of the recycled internal marketplace
 - Expanded reporting on impact across all four pillars

While many foundational elements align with sectoral legal and ethical norms, the next CSR accreditation cycle offers a strong opportunity to elevate this work and **lead by example** within the Birmingham business ecosystem.

Conclusion

The Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce has made significant strides in embedding Corporate Social Responsibility across its operations. Through clear values, committed leadership, and an authentic focus on people and planet, GBCC is not only supporting businesses—it's shaping a better future for the wider community.