

Rationale

# Creating positive impact

Impact Report 2023





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# Welcome to our 2023 Impact Report

**Looking back at how far we've come as a business and a B Corp over the last year, what stands out most is, not only the proven value of being a purpose-led company, but how our people, and our investment in them, are what helps us continue to thrive.**

The north star guiding Rationale since its inception has always been **creating impact** - for clients, in how their brand and communications achieve their objectives, and for us, in how we do business. **Our people** have always been at the heart of this and 2023 has perfectly showcased Team Rationale's commitment to creating impact.

A perfect example has been the development of our **new company principles**, which began during our trip to Madrid at the end of summer and continued through multiple feedback sessions. Building on our previous company values and driven by the input and insight of the entire team, we are proud to have reached a set of principles that represent our culture and the collective approach behind everything we do. You can read these on pages 5 and 6 in this report.

Our investment in people reached a new level this year with the introduction of eight new job roles across the agency, including a part-time Finance Manager and the establishment of a Senior Management Team.

It's thanks to the tireless, endlessly creative work of our people that we have been able to grow our client base, and subsequently attract even more talented individuals to join Team Rationale.

To facilitate this growth, we moved Rationale to a **brand-new office** in Leith, putting us right at the heart of Edinburgh's creative hub. This has been an excellent chance to further our environmental goals as we continue to make our premises, resources and way of working as **sustainable as possible** with the help of our team, our landlord and our suppliers.

Combined, this has afforded us greater capacity and opportunities for business development. We are proud to have worked with some fantastic clients throughout 2023 and have established strong relationships we hope will continue well into the future. We also engaged in several **pro-bono projects** and had senior team members provide **mentoring and tutoring** within local communities.

The connective tissue between all this work has been our proposition around impact and putting purpose at the forefront of brand communication. As we bring in new clients and pro-bono work in 2024, I'm confident we will even further align our approach with the impact values of B Corp.

I continue to be amazed by the depth of **talent and commitment** from our team, and as we move into what promises to be another exciting year, I hope this report offers a compelling snapshot of everything that Rationale represents as we build towards even greater heights in 2024.



**Rowan Morrison**  
Co-founder and Co-managing Director





# We are **Rationale**

We are a strategic brand and communications agency, supporting clients to **define, articulate** and **amplify** what matters most to their audiences.

As a **purpose-driven** organisation, our mission is to create impact and grow our agency by making **positive changes** wherever we can.



# Our principles



Team values and mission session in Madrid.



## We're in it for the long-term

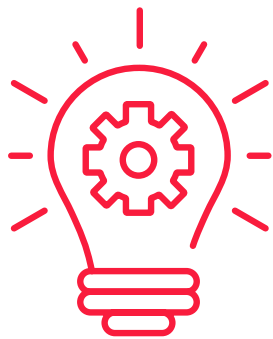
We're focused on the **sustainable, strategic growth** of Rationale and the related development of our people. Thinking long-term is fundamental to the **ongoing stability** of our business and is what allows us to make the most impact for our team, for our clients, and for the wider world.

This approach underpins everything we do in terms of our decision-making - and it also applies to how we **cultivate lasting, supportive relationships** with clients, partner organisations, and suppliers.

We're building something strong at Rationale - something that will endure, and something of which we can all be proud.



Hosting a storytelling workshop at Bupa.



## We find a way

Rationale is made up of a talented and unique team of **tenacious problem-solvers** who are curious about uncovering what's possible. No matter how complicated the ask, we will do our best to **find a way** to make it happen.

We **deliver on our promises** at Rationale by being considerate and proactive, not only in how we approach our work, but in how we treat and respect each other's needs at work.



# Our principles



## We have high standards

Rationale’s success comes from having a happy and fulfilled team of people who are **trusted and empowered** to do their jobs well. In doing this, we hold ourselves and each other accountable to the **highest standards** of quality, relevance and creativity in every single piece of work that leaves the agency.

Keeping this aim front-of-mind results in a value exchange - our people drive the success of our business and this feeds back into each individual’s personal and professional growth.



## We have fun

Work is where we spend most of our time, so why shouldn’t it be fun? While we take our work very seriously, we **don’t take ourselves too seriously**.

We will always take time to lighten the load, to keep perspective, and to make each other - and our clients - feel relaxed, secure in expressing themselves and able to have a laugh.



# Taking exciting new steps on our **B Corp journey**

**Becoming an accredited B Corp was something we strived for since Rationale began.**

We officially started the process in 2021 and became B Corp certified in February 2022. We're incredibly proud to have achieved an **overall impact score of 100.4** upon certification but we have our sights set high on improving our score as we work towards B Corp recertification in 2025.



## **Why we decided to become a B Corp**

Since Rationale was founded in 2019, our team has been passionate about gaining our B Corp certification. The B Corp assessment criteria provided us with a framework to build our business in a way that balances profit with purpose and is authentic to our mission as a purpose-driven organisation.

## **How we became B Corp certified**

Becoming certified was no mean feat, it took time and required input from our entire organisation. Many of our policies were already B Corp-friendly, including our employee benefit programme, but we had to make some other changes to gain certification, such as using an independent banking service provider.

## **What's next?**

Every year we are required to complete an annual Impact Report to show our progress and set goals. In 2024, we aim to improve our B Corp score and set ambitious targets to improve our social and environmental impact. The next B Corp milestone is recertification in 2025.



# Our score

By 2025, we aim to have improved our B Corp impact score across all areas.

In our first year as a B Corp we achieved high scores in Workers (30.2) and Community (27.3), as well as earning the Best for the World award for Governance.

Score breakdown

- 20.3 Governance
- 17.2 Customers
- 27.3 Community
- 30.2 Workers
- 5.1 Environment

A score of over 100 is considered **outstanding**.

200  
Maximum score

100.4 Our score

80  
Qualifies for B Corp certification

50.9  
Median score for ordinary businesses



# Improvement plan

**Our improvement plan guides every action we take as a B Corp, committing us to continual development in each B Corp impact area: governance, customers, community, workers and environment.**

Across each area, our improvement plan outlines **what we said we'd do** in 2023, **what we achieved** and **where we're going next** in 2024 and beyond.



# Governance

**The governance impact area evaluates our overall mission, engagement around our social and environmental impact, ethics and transparency.**

We promote a non-hierarchical structure with an open-door policy to senior management. Making sure everyone's voices contribute to the direction of the business is important to us and we provide regular opportunities for staff to play an active role in setting our goals and business objectives.

Following our significant growth in 2023, we have focused on re-evaluating our governing processes, from developing our Senior Management Team to reviewing company policies around ethical use of technology.



# 20.3

Our **governance** impact score in 2022



# Mission and engagement

## What we said

- Evaluate our social and environmental targets and key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure progress
- Continue providing opportunities for employees to positively influence the direction of the company

## What we did

- Redefined our mission and principles to reflect our growing business
- Onboarded a climate action partner, Seedling, to support with KPI setting and monitoring
- Onboarded Cactus as a consultative board to support the sustainable growth of our business
- Grew our Senior Management Team (SMT) with representation from each department. Made up of three women and two men
- Onboarded an external HR consultant to provide expertise and outside perspective

## What's next?

- Incorporate social and environmental issues into performance reviews
- With Seedling's support, start measuring social and environmental outcomes over time
- Include social and environmental impact as an agenda item in our board meetings
- Embed environmental goals into monthly SMT meetings

**60%**

of our Senior Management Team are women.

Bringing in an external HR consultant has provided a **fresh outlook** on how we **support our team** and our HR responsibilities in the **best way possible.**



# Ethics and transparency

## What we said

- Increase transparency around the ethics that govern our decisions and behaviour
- Increase financial transparency with our employees

## What we did

- Carried out wholesale policy review and recirculation to align with our growing business
- Started developing an AI policy and principles
- Launched a video series to explore the impact of AI technology on brand and communications
- Increased financial transparency through a salary benchmarking exercise and communicated this with the team
- Incorporated financial updates into our monthly all-agency meetings
- Recruited and onboarded a new Finance Manager to improve our financial modelling and processes
- Updated our Employee Handbook, including an updated organisational chart outlining the reporting and management structure of the company
- Recruited an independent HR consultant

## What's next?

- Share and embed our AI policy and principles internally and externally
- Set up an AI working group and meet monthly to discuss ethical and technological advancements
- Create a written code of ethics that incorporates our approach to AI
- Conduct an ethics-focused risk assessment
- Publicly make available our social and environmental performance
- Introduce an intentional education program around shared financials with full-time employees





# Rationale on AI

“

When it comes to the use of artificial intelligence, developing our AI policy and AI principles into the agency’s operational framework is crucial for **fostering trust, transparency, and accountability**. As a B Corp, this is particularly important.

We are aligned with B Corp’s commitment to making a positive impact in everything that we do. Our internal AI policy will ensure that staff are aligned with best practices for ethical AI use, safeguarding against misuse. Externally, our AI principles will convey to clients and partners Rationale’s **dedication to ethical standards**, reinforcing B Corp’s mission towards social responsibility, environmental sustainability, and equitable technological advancement.

In addition, we are setting up an internal AI working group to ensure that any AI-related decisions and practices remain in lockstep with emerging ethical guidelines and technological advancements, fostering a **culture of continuous learning and adaptation** – a key Rationale, and B Corp, principle.”

**Svein Clouston**

Co-founder and Co-managing Director





# Customers

**The customers impact area evaluates our client stewardship through the quality of our services, ethical marketing, data privacy and feedback channels.**

Our clients are at the heart of who we are as an agency and our work for them balances profitability with authentic purpose. We are proud to have continued working with purpose-driven clients in 2023, with many addressing social issues related to health and education.



# 17.2

Our **customers** impact score  
in 2022





# Customer stewardship

## What we said

- Aim to be more transparent around service costs, value, and processes for our clients
- Increase client feedback opportunities to help improve our service offering
- Improve our communication with all users, including clients, about our data usage and storage

## What we did

- Reviewed our services and processes and created templated costs and narrative for invoices
- Reviewed client invoice delivery to be broken up by project stages to be more transparent around costs
- Added internal and external debriefs into our project processes so clients and employees' voices are heard
- Reviewed our data and privacy policy and instructed our IT provider to review on an annual basis

## What's next?

- Roll out new feedback survey to all clients
- Develop a strategy to report positive outcomes and impact of work
- Make all users aware of information collected, length of time it is preserved, how it's used, and whether and how it is shared with other entities (public or private)

9

We are proud to have won work from **9 new clients** in 2023.



Svein and Rowan hosting a Bupa Dental Care workshop in Coventry, UK.



# Our work

We've had the pleasure of working with a diverse range of clients across industries including healthcare, medical technology, education and more.

We've taken a look back at just some of the work we've done for these organisations and what they had to say about working with us.

Case study

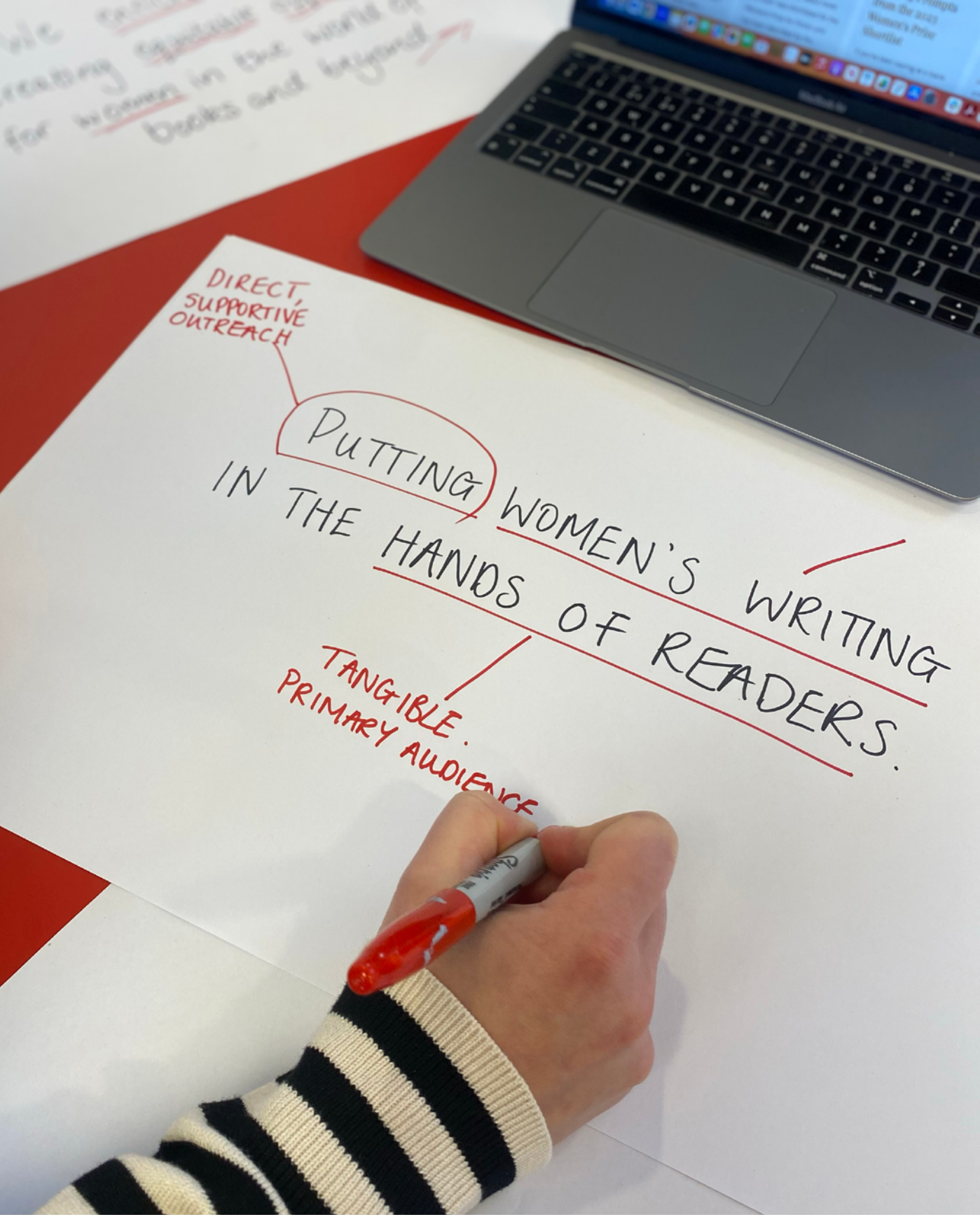
## Women's Prize Trust

The Women's Prize Trust creates equitable opportunities for women in the world of books and beyond, working with women writers at all stages of development, and all readers, to unlock potential, boost confidence, and increase skills and knowledge.

Our pro-bono work with the trust has centred around refining and amplifying its messaging and value proposition to its diverse audiences, including funders and beneficiaries.

“We are very grateful to Rationale for partnering with the charity and offering their expertise to our small team. Rationale **took time to really understand** who we are, what we stand for and our impact. Their **collaborative and creative approach** to developing our messaging and value proposition has led to a greater impact for our beneficiaries and a refreshed fundraising approach, as we can proudly stand behind and communicate our mission.”

**Executive Director**  
Women's Prize Trust



**190**  
pro-bono hours  
provided to Women's  
Prize Trust in 2023.



Case study

# Cortechs.ai

**Cortechs.ai is a pioneer in radiology AI applications, and we were approached to re-articulate their brand to reflect the technological expertise and human impact of their work.**

Following a series of discovery sessions to understand their technological advantage and clinical impact, we supported Cortechs.ai to develop a visual and narrative brand that reflected their core values of precision, compassion, and innovation.

“

From the very start of our partnership, Rationale demonstrated **a deep understanding** of our unique challenges and industry landscape.

What sets Rationale apart - other than their deep knowledge of our space - is how they were able to **effectively diagnose, build, and point our strategy** to the precise space and audience that would **generate the most impact** for our messaging.”

**Chief Commercial Officer**  
Cortechs.ai



Case study

# Bupa Business UK

**Bupa is one of the UK's largest providers of private health insurance for businesses.**

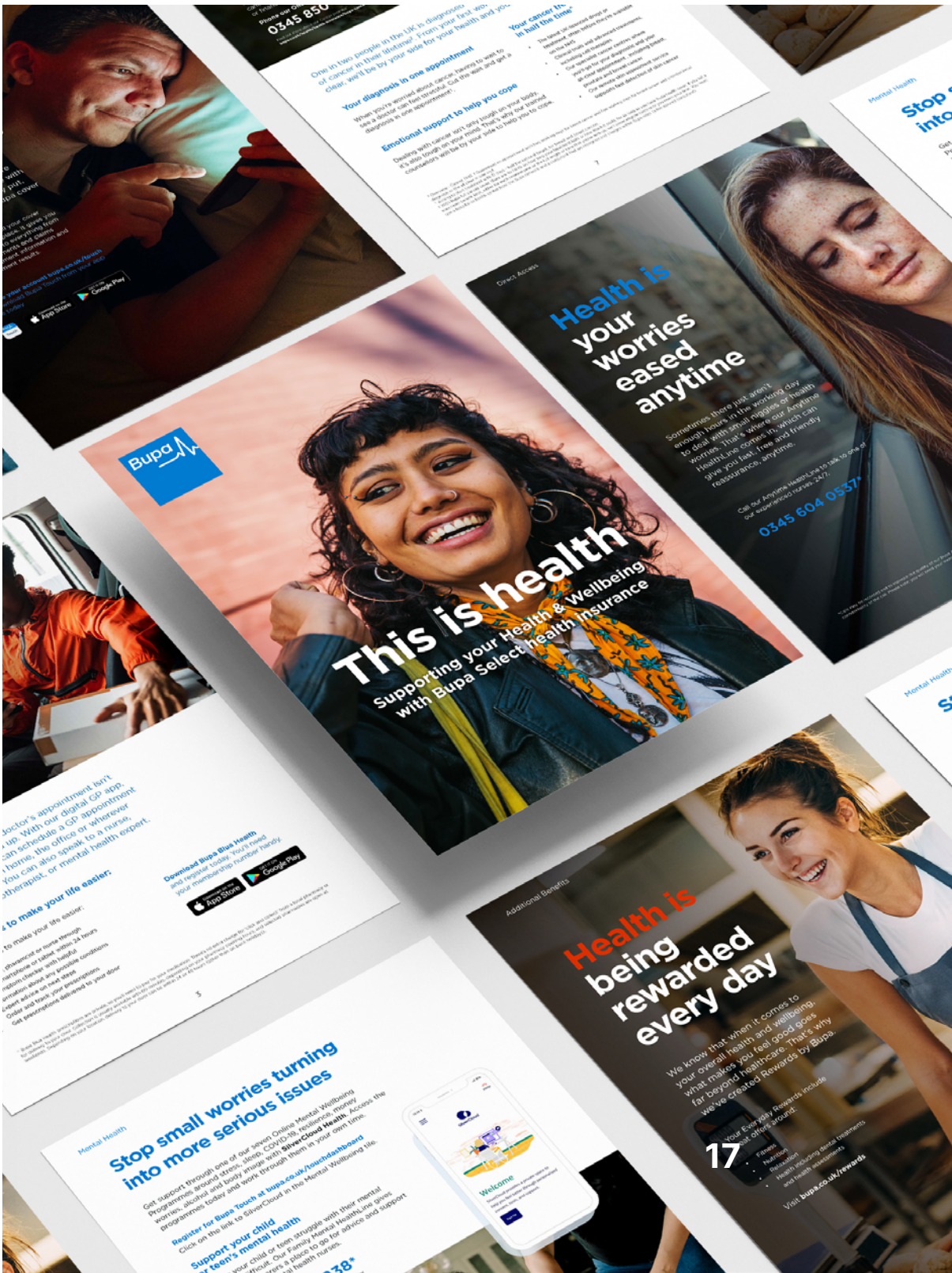
We have collaborated closely with the Bupa SME and corporate teams to help them articulate and amplify their mission of helping people live longer, healthier and happier lives.

Built on the proposition that happy, healthy employees can help a business grow, our work so far with Bupa has helped to enhance their brand communications and captivate their target audiences, spanning brand strategy, storytelling, and graphic/motion design.

“

From launching a new growth proposition to bolster our brand with SMEs, or getting into the weeds and helping us transform our customer engagement journey, Rationale has demonstrated they can **build compelling strategies** and then deliver **really creative and effective** communications.”

**B2B Marketing and Customer Director**  
Bupa B2B





# Community

**The community impact area evaluates our engagement with and impact on our local community covering topics such as diversity, equity and inclusion, economic impact, civic engagement, charitable giving, and supply chain management.**

We aim to make a positive impact in our community in a number of ways, from giving our staff one paid day off a year to volunteer for local charities to engaging in pro-bono work for non-profit clients. Our team made great efforts within the local community throughout 2023, from creative mentoring and tutoring to business coaching, and we foresee connections made this year continuing to flourish as our business grows.



27.3

Our **community** impact score in 2022





# Community highlights in 2023

80% 

increase in volunteer hours from 2022 to 2023

227 

pro-bono hours donated

£20k 

donated to charities

£2k 

fundraised as part of the Moonwalk Scotland

30 

hours of coaching for female leaders provided by Co-founder and Co-managing Director, Rowan Morrison

5 

hours of 1-2-1 creative mentoring provided by Senior Designer, Sarah Vance



Hana, Rowan, Siân, Angela and Carron during the Moonwalk Scotland.



Aisling, Clodagh and Kyra at River Kids for their annual volunteer day.

“I’m grateful to have had the opportunity to volunteer with River Kids. It was **eye-opening** to learn about the number of children who go without, and it was **great to spend the day helping** in some way.

Doing this with my colleagues was also **really fun and a nice opportunity** to spend time getting to know each other outside of work.”

Kyra Allen  
Account Director



# Diversity, equity and inclusion

## What we said

- Maintain a respectful, inclusive workplace by providing bias training and highlighting barriers to diversity and inclusion for staff
- Improve the diversity of our team by working with organisations, including We Are Here Scotland, to highlight and dismantle barriers to employment for individuals from diverse backgrounds

## What we did

- Maintained equitable recruitment practices with support from our recruitment consultant
- Meetings with reps for We Are Here Scotland on how we can improve diversity and inclusion
- HR consultant sourced list of suitable diversity and inclusion training courses

## What's next?

- Follow up on opportunities to send SMT to attend diversity and inclusion training
- Explore initiatives to offer an internship to a candidate from an underrepresented group
- Progress towards the following accreditations:
  - Workplace Wellbeing Charter employer accreditation
  - Equally Safe at Work employer accreditation
- Investigate the merits of appointing a Mental Health First Aid officer
- Start to undertake the Think Business, Think Equality self-assessment to identify how we can improve our gender equality further



We are proud to be a **women-led business** with 75% of company managers being women.



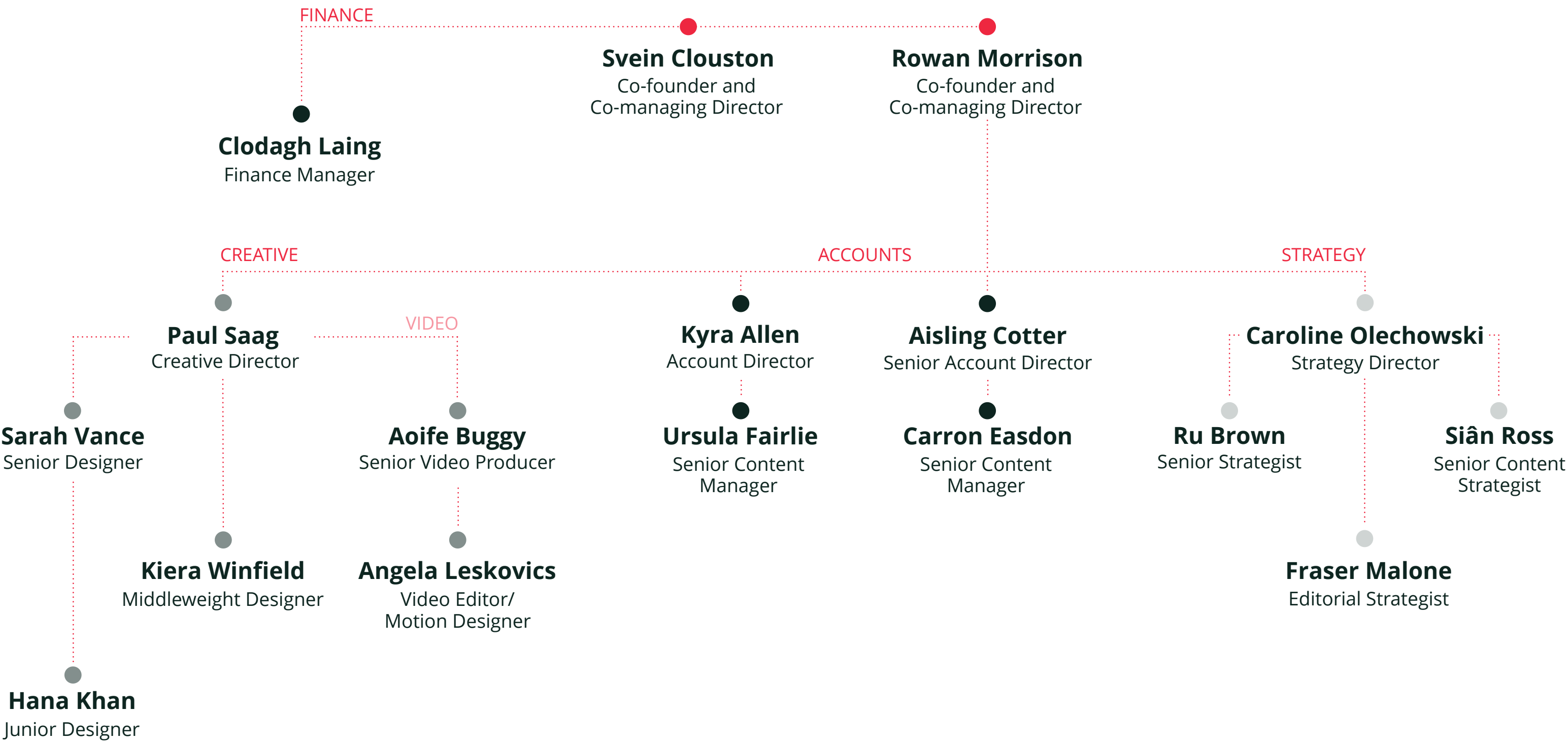
# Economic impact

We experienced an **89% job growth rate**, representing **eight new roles** created across the agency.

## Our organisation

We are proud to operate under a structure that allows our people many opportunities to grow and provides direct line management for all members of the team.

We implement a clear progression pathway and where necessary will create new job roles to fill niches and ensure we have the right level of support on client projects.





# Civic engagement and giving

## What we said

- Increase our volunteer hours and aim to send 100% of the team on volunteering days
- Increase shared skills volunteering and pro-bono support for local charities and organisations
- Increase civic engagement with the local community

## What we did

- Monitored and recorded total volunteer hours
- Increase our volunteer days by 80% from 2022 to 2023, with 72 hours donated in total
- Set pro-bono working targets for 2024
- Provided 227 pro-bono hours in 2023
- Allowed our workers to select charities to receive company donations
- Renewed charitable membership to Bumblebee Conservation Trust
- Co-founder and Co-managing Director, Rowan, offered mentorship and professional development opportunities for women as a Women's Enterprise Scotland ambassador
- Our Creative Director became a tutor at Edinburgh College of Art
- Senior Designer, Sarah, mentored with Creative Edinburgh
- Some of our team completed the 13.1 mile Moonwalk for charity and Rationale matched the total raised
- Organised the team to carry out litter picking in our local park

## What's next?

- Host a company service day
- Work towards 100% of our team using their volunteer day
- Aim to donate up to 15 pro-bono hours a month, to a range of organisations
- Continue to support local charities and small businesses by providing meeting space

72

volunteer hours donated.



Team litter pick in Leith Links.



Kiera, Carron and Angela volunteering with River Kids.



Siân, Paul and Sarah volunteering with Empty Kitchens Full Hearts.



Hana, Aoife and Ursula volunteering with FreshStart.



# Workers

**The workers impact area evaluates our contributions to employees' financial security, health and safety, wellness, career development and engagement and satisfaction.**

We work hard to promote a healthy and happy workforce and as such have established a best practice Employee Benefit scheme. This includes access to private medical insurance, our Living Wage and Disability Confident credentials, our commitments to employee career development and implementing a staff bonus policy.



# 30.2

Our **workers** impact score  
in 2022



# Financial security

## What we did

- Shared the growth and success of our business over the past 12 months by awarding monetary bonuses to staff in January 2024 with 100% of our full-time and part-time employees receiving a bonus
- Increased transparency around awarding of bonuses by updating and circulating our bonus policy

## What's next?

- Review salaries and adjust if necessary to Living Wage increase in April 2024



# 100%

of our part-time and full-time employees received an **annual monetary bonus**.





# Career development

## What we said

- Provide more opportunities to support employees' professional growth and improvement

## What we did

- Delivered an agency-wide professional development presentation
- Reviewed and updated our employee review process, which is now conducted every six months, rather than once a year
- Introduced more formal approach to 360-degree peer feedback to be given annually
- Senior Content Manager, Ursula Fairlie, attended a Carbon Literacy Course
- Senior Account Director, Aisling Cotter, attended an Account Accelerator Course
- Introduced and communicated a dedicated training budget for each employee
- Introduced opportunities for internal promotion with new Senior Account Director and Editorial Strategist roles

## What's next?

- Provide opportunities for skills-based training on cross-job functions beyond regular responsibilities (e.g. public speaking training, management training for non-managers)
- Investigate standardising post-project feedback opportunities for freelancers

"I was **really excited** by the opportunity to apply for Senior Account Director and **challenged myself** to go for the role.

I was delighted to have a **growth opportunity** so soon after joining Rationale and appreciated how my colleague and I were both **supported through the interview process.**"

**Aisling Cotter**  
Senior Account Director







Hana and Carron at a B Local event in Glasgow hosted by Dear Green Coffee Roasters.

# Engagement and satisfaction

## What we said

- Review policies around menstruation and menopause
- Improve transparency and internal communications around our B Corp status and our impact

## What we did

- Renewed and shared menopause policy with the entire team, and reviewed all our policies before circulating with the team
- Delivered a presentation to the wider team about our 2022/23 Impact Report
- Incorporated B Corp updates into weekly team stand ups to keep people updated with our progress and next steps
- Held a B Corp Lunch and Learn to engage the whole team in our commitment to using business as a force for good
- Continued to measure employee satisfaction with weekly pulse check surveys and scored 8.2/10 in December 2023

## What's next?

- Engage wider team in B Corp month
- Provide a B Corp progress update in all-staff meetings
- Host a B Local event at our office to bring together fellow B Corps in Scotland

8.2 

In 2023, we measured our **employee satisfaction** using weekly confidential surveys through OfficeVibe, with an average score of 8.2/10 in December 2023.



# Environment

**Environment evaluates our overall environmental management practices as well as our impact on the air, climate, water, land, and biodiversity.**

With a growing international presence in Europe and the USA, we are mindful of our carbon footprint when travelling to meet new and existing clients. That's why in 2023, one of our goals was to better measure and improve our environmental impact where we can. Since gaining B Corp certification we moved offices to make room for our growing team, which presented a new opportunity to better manage our environmental impact.



5.1

Our **environment** impact score in 2022



# Environmental management

## What we said

- Ensure waste disposal bins are in the optimal place for easy waste disposal, and keep track of this with Changeworks
- Create better environmental stewardships for our staff and provide guidance on sustainable practices when working from home
- Increase our engagement with 1% for the Planet organisations and charities
- Increase our green building standard at our new office

## What we did

- Maintained waste reduction programs with Changeworks and moved recycling and waste bins to optimal locations in office for efficient waste disposal
- Started working on a best practice environmental stewardship guide in home and in the office
- Renewed our membership with Bumblebee Conservation Trust
- Switched to a green energy supplier, Octopus Energy, in our new office premise
- Worked with our new landlord to implement energy efficiency improvements by switching radiators
- Reviewed our suppliers for office products and switched to three new B Corp suppliers

## What's next?

- Share the best practice environmental stewardship guide with staff
- Work with our landlord to improve water efficiency
- Work with Seedling to evaluate ways in which we can reduce our carbon footprint
- Source our Friday after-hours drinks from local breweries and suppliers to minimise carbon footprint

Hana at a visit to the Changeworks waste and recycling depot.





# Air and climate

## What we said

- Improve cycle storage spaces at our new office premises

## What we did

- Applied and received a grant from Cycle Scotland for a cycle storage unit to encourage more staff to cycle to work
- Reached 25% of staff cycling and 38% staff walking to work
- Attended a talk on e-waste to learn more about our e-footprint and practices we can put in place

## What's next?

- Monitor and record energy usage and set intensity targets
- Look at e-wastage in more depth, and online storage management
- Look at more sustainable design choices, e.g colours that produce less e-waste and carbon footprint, and offer that to clients

63%

of staff cycle or walk to work.



Depot tour at Changeworks, our waste and recycling supplier.

# Land and life

## What we did

- Regularly monitored and recorded waste produced, reducing waste to landfill by 5% reduction from baseline year
- Implement a company-wide recycling program that includes composting and food waste

## What's next?

- Set specific reduction targets for waste produced
- Set up a process to dispose of hazardous waste responsibly e.g. batteries, paint, electronic equipment
- Focus on moving to more sustainable suppliers for office consumables such as inks, and review our current orders to minimise footprint

5%

reduction in landfill waste.



We attended an event on Digital Sustainability.





# Goals for 2024

**We're proud of everything we've achieved in our first two years as a certified B Corp, but we know there's still more to be done.**

In 2024 we will focus on key areas for improvement, such as Customers and Environment, while maintaining our high scores in Workers, Community and Governance.

Rationale experienced rapid growth in 2023, and as we continue to expand our team and client base, we will align closely with B Corp impact areas and our updated company principles to make our growth as sustainable as possible.



Rationale

Thank you

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