



HARDSCAPE GROUP

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policies and Report

This report contains our:

- Fairness, Inclusion, and Respect policies and reports, including:
 - Equality and Diversity Policy
 - Prevention of Discrimination, Harassment, Bullying, and Victimisation
 - Immigration and Right-to-work policies
 - Employee Wellbeing, Mental Health, and Stress policies and strategies
 - Employee satisfaction survey report
- Social Value policies and reports, including:
 - Social Value policy
 - Community engagement
 - Charitable support

Hardscape Group Ltd, incorporating Hardscape Products Ltd & Hardscape Surfaces Ltd (furthermore known as Hardscape) offer a specialist service for the selection, specification, and supply of innovative, diverse, and high-quality hard landscaping products. We use high performance, cost effective, and ethically sourced products including paving, setts, cladding, artwork, and street furniture using materials such as Granite, Sandstone, Limestone, Porphyry, and Slate or manufactured concrete and clay products which may contain metal or wooden accessories and detailing.

Operating from offices throughout the UK, **Hardscape Products** has an extensive portfolio of supplying materials for prestigious hard landscaping schemes for urban, civic, public realm, commercial, and private projects.

Hardscape Surfaces is a manufacturing facility, capable of cutting, shaping, finish texturization, and enhancement of multi-material hard surfaces utilising the latest hi-tec laser technology, mechanical processes, and artisan handcrafted techniques.



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Equality Policy

Hardscape is committed to encouraging equality and diversity among our workforce and eliminating unlawful discrimination. The aim is for our workforce to be truly representative of all sections of society and our customers, and for each employee to feel respected and able to give their best. The organisation, in providing goods and/or services and/or facilities, is also committed against unlawful discrimination of customers or the public.

This policy applies anywhere on our premises, anywhere off our premises during work-related business events, anywhere off our premises during work-related social events, or anywhere off our premises during business trips.

The policy's purpose is to:

- provide equality, fairness, and respect for all in our employ, whether temporary, part-time, or full-time
- not unlawfully discriminate because of the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, sex (gender) and sexual orientation.
- oppose and avoid all forms of unlawful discrimination. This includes pay and benefits, terms and conditions of employment, dealing with grievances and discipline, dismissal, redundancy, leave for parents, requests for flexible working, recruitment, promotion, training, or other developmental opportunities.

Hardscape commits to:

- encourage equality and diversity in the workplace as they are good practice and make business sense.
- create a working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation, and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and the contributions of all staff are recognised and valued.

This commitment includes training managers and all other employees about their rights and responsibilities under the equality policy. Responsibilities include staff conducting themselves to help the organisation provide equal opportunities in employment, and prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation, and unlawful discrimination. All staff should understand they, as well as their employer, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation, and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment, against fellow employees, customers, suppliers and the public.

- take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, customers, suppliers, visitors, the public and any others during the organisation's work activities. Such acts will be dealt with as misconduct under the organisation's grievance and/or disciplinary procedures, and any appropriate action will be taken. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice. Furthermore, sexual harassment (regardless of relating to a protected characteristic) may amount to both an employment rights matter and a criminal matter, such as in sexual assault allegations.
- make opportunities for training, development, and progress available to all staff, who will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their talents can be fully utilised to support the organisation.
- decisions concerning staff being based on merit (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act).
- review employment practices and procedures when necessary to ensure fairness and update them and the policy to take account of changes in the law.
- monitor the diversity of the workforce with information such as age, gender, ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability to see if we meet the aims and commitments set out in the equality policy. Monitoring will include assessing how the equality policy, and any supporting action plan, are working in practice, reviewing them annually, and considering and taking action to address any issues.

The equality policy is fully supported by senior management and employee representatives. Details of the organisation's grievance and disciplinary policies & procedures can be found in the employee handbook. Use of the organisation's grievance and/or disciplinary procedures does not affect an employee's right to make a claim to an employment tribunal within three months of the alleged discrimination.

Alex Warren

Alex Warren - Managing Director

Dated: 9th May 2025



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Immigration and Right to Work Policy

Hardscape are committed to treating all employees, current and prospective, fairly and with equality, regardless of Nationality (original, adopted, or dual), Citizenship, or refugee status.

We do not recruit EU or International Labour to pay less wages for skilled or unskilled workers, and prefer to invest in staff retention, manufacturing technologies, and automation.

Since the 1st of January 2021, EU citizens, like non-EU Citizens from the rest of the world, must obtain legal confirmation of “Right to Work” in the UK. This can be done via several methods:

- Obtaining a Skilled Worker Visa, for positions requiring A-Level qualifications or above (or equivalent)
- Prior acceptance of settled status under the “EU Settlement Scheme”.
- Citizenship of the Republic of Ireland or Northern Ireland.
- Sponsorship from an approved employer sponsor.
- Application for a Visa under individual nation Visa Support Schemes (i.e. Ukraine or Hong Kong)

We do not currently act as an approved sponsor, do not have roles which require specific skills in short supply, or have exempt roles under the Immigration (Exemption from Control) Order 1972 (as amended).

Hardscape follow the Home Office approved Right to Work Checklist to ensure successful applicants for new roles have obtained a right to work in the UK. This must be done prior to starting work.

UK citizens must provide a passport showing the holder has a right to live and work in the UK. This may apply to UK territories, which can be reviewed in the Home Office [The Overseas territories: An Introduction and Relations with the UK](#) document. If an applicant does not have a passport, we would accept production of a UK Birth or Adoption Certificate and an official document with the holder’s permanent National insurance Number and name included, issued by the Government or previous employer.

Non-UK citizens must provide a current Passport, Biometric Immigration Document, Residence Card, or Immigration Status Document, endorsed to show the right to stay in the UK.

Failure to provide this information will prevent a prospective employee from starting work with us.

We will check the documents presented to ensure they are genuine, using the Home Office Right to Work Checklist as a guide to ensure this is compliant. For non-UK citizens, we will verify this by carrying out an Online Check through the Home Office Employer Checking Service.

We will take clear copies of each document or check record in an unalterable format. These records will be retained securely throughout their employment and where required, at least 2 years after if they leave the business.

Alex Warren

Alex Warren - Managing Director

Dated: 9th May 2025

Fairness, Inclusion, & Respect Development

To promote the advancement of positive changes to culture, attitudes, and behaviours, we incorporate various tactics and measures to normalise differences, show the benefits of diverse teamwork, and ensure our staff all feel welcomed and supported in the same way.

These measures may include:

- Understanding our employee diversity information, through annual surveys and internal reports to highlight our achievements and development opportunities.
- Regular training for our staff in equality and diversity, which is continually updated to reflect industry and national approaches and developments.
- Using the Supply Chain Sustainability School (SCSS) and its resources to further advance management training and knowledge about Fairness, Inclusion, and Respect, which is one of the SCSS’s key action areas.
- Promoting and supporting recognised Diversity annual events or campaigns, such as Pride Month or International Women’s Day on our internal social media platform and on public social media forums.
- Posters, e-mails, decorations, or flyers detailing our support for inclusion as a company.
- Publishing gender, race, or disability pay reports and summaries.
- Ensuring our staff, contractors, and suppliers all adhere to our policies, procedures, Code of Conduct, or Supplier Code of Conduct, with regular reminders, monitoring, and effective investigation where concerns, allegations, or complaints are raised.



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Mental Health & Wellbeing

Employee Wellbeing, Mental Health, and Stress

We recognise that we have a duty to take action to reduce and where reasonably practicable to reduce or eliminate mental ill-health caused by work related stress or personal stress exacerbated by work activities. Wellbeing is vitally important to our business, as it ensures our employees are engaged, motivated, and thrive in their roles, ensuring maximum productivity, quality, and service.

If poor mental health wellbeing or stress is not recognised and dealt with at an early stage, it is likely to lead to long-term health effects. Advice and support on this topic are available from the HSE, which forms much of our policy and actions regarding how we deal with management of stress. Where stress is prolonged or particularly intense it may lead to:

- High blood pressure.
- Heart disease.
- Ulcers.
- Thyroid disorders.
- Gastrointestinal disturbances.
- Psychological effects, such as anxiety and depression.
- Other behaviours, like skipping meals, drinking too much alcohol and excessive smoking.

This can lead to secondary severe consequences, such as:

- Resignation and unemployment.
- Self-harm
- Stress-induced transmission of violence.
- Suicide.

Whilst stress is most often seen as workload related there are other factors that cause stress, such as:

- Task-related factors:
 - Tasks being physically or mentally beyond the individual's capacity.
 - Information overload.
 - Repetitive or boring tasks.
 - Excessive workloads, long working hours, unsocial hours.
 - Covering for colleagues' poor performance or absence.
- Interpersonal factors:
 - Bullying, abuse, and harassment from colleagues or managers.
 - Isolation or ignorance from others.
- Little or no recognition for work done.
- Role changes or promotions leading to extra responsibilities or workloads.
- Role ambiguity - the individual has no clear idea of what is expected of them.
- Role conflict - opposing demands are made on an individual by different people.
- Being given poor or insufficient information and support.
- Lack of engagement when change is being planned or implemented.
- Personal threat - threat to personal safety or fear of redundancy or dismissal.
- Environmental factors: noise, heat, lighting, or cleanliness.
- Working alone or excessive working from home.
- Bereavement or separation.



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Mental Health & Wellbeing Strategy

We go beyond what is regulated, continually aiming to develop our policies, procedures, and control measures to ensure we offer employees the best protections, support, and space to ensure their continued mental health and wellbeing. We do this by:

- Identifying Mental Health Leaders and advisors to guide strategy and policy.
- Nominating competent senior employees to consider and manage the issue of work-related stress, wellbeing, and mental health protection and development.
- Developing and implementing a policy and strategy for identifying and managing mental health, wellbeing, and work-related stress, involving our employees in the development of these.
- Identifying and implementing strategies, control measures, or actions that may be required, such as:
 - Arranging support partners, services, or programs for employees to access or get advice.
 - Organising regular social, mental health development, or wellbeing events which are fully inclusive.
 - Organising large annual events or special focus events for key wellbeing target areas.
 - Promoting and informing employees of specific mental health programmes or campaigns.
 - Identifying, training, and supporting the role of Mental Health First-Aiders throughout the business.
 - Arranging mental health awareness training for all managers and supervisors.
 - Maintaining access to Mental Health & Wellbeing resources, guidance, and contact information.
 - Maintaining regular communication with all employees to reinforce support and an open-door policy.
 - Ensuring the Employee Handbook reflects relevant mental health & wellbeing information.
- Providing information and training about the Equality (Fairness, Inclusion, and Respect) policy to all workers and ensuring that the policy is followed.
- Ensuring Managers and Supervisors understand the procedures, so they may effectively monitor and supervise their employees, so they may recognise symptoms of work-related stress or mental ill-health.
- Ensuring employees know what to do if they suspect they, or a colleague, are suffering from mental ill-health or stress.
- Providing access and signposting to publicly available support & counselling or occupational health services and support, such as MIND, Andy's Man Club, and VIVUP Health & Wellbeing services.
- Monitoring and reviewing the policy and procedures; using our experience of operating these arrangements to make improvements to the way we manage wellbeing, mental ill-health, and work-related stress.
- Monitor and review the operation of the policy and procedure regularly, and following any case of mental ill-health, or work-related stress cases, making changes to the procedures as necessary or beneficial.





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Employee Satisfaction Survey

We conduct an Annual Employee Engagement Survey, where questions are put to all employees across the business on a wide variety of aspects. These questions are regularly reviewed by the Senior Management Team and EOT Board, and developed where opportunities are recognised, or where new concerns may be raised.

The scores may indicate where we perform well and may also show weaknesses in our performance, which will advise us of where our policies, procedures, or arrangements may need to change and improve to meet our employee's needs.

We will review progress against the previous year and evaluate the effectiveness of our developments and actions.

Here is a selection of some of the target questions and scores which have been grouped into all positive responses as a percentage of the overall number of responses.

Question	% Score 2023	% Score 2024
I feel safe at work.	100	97 ↓
I feel I have good job security and stability at Hardscape Group.	94	97 ↑
I am satisfied with my current role at Hardscape Group.	89	95 ↑
I am satisfied with the benefits available at Hardscape Group	89	95 ↑
I am satisfied the equipment provided in my workplace suits my physical needs.	92	92 =
I am confident I know the channels available to express my thoughts and concerns.	81	92 ↑
I am likely to stay at Hardscape Group for the foreseeable future.	89	89 =
I feel I have a healthy work-life balance at Hardscape Group.	81	86 ↑
I have a manageable workload.	83	84 ↑
Hardscape Group has a diverse and inclusive workplace.	83	81 ↓
I am comfortable using the channels available to express my thoughts and concerns	75	81 ↑
I feel my voice is heard at Hardscape Group.	69	70 ↑
I am satisfied with the training and development opportunities provided.	69	79 ↑
I feel I have opportunities for career growth and advancement at Hardscape Group.	61	68 ↑
I find my appraisals and reviews useful for my development.	61	65 ↑
I feel able to switch off and forget about work during weekends/holidays.	56	62 ↑
I am satisfied with the training and development opportunities provided	69	59 ↓
I have appraisals/reviews often enough.	42	51 ↑

Achievements, Goals, & Targets

The results were very positive, with significant improvements in many areas. Since becoming an Employee-owned business, our staff turnover has significantly reduced, demonstrating how our long-term strategies for the business and our group benefits have supported staff satisfaction and retention.

The improvement measures and actions implemented last year seem to have had a positive impact in many areas. These actions included:

- Better communication of company strategies and targets through further AGM meetings.
- Improved internal social media communication regarding wellbeing, company progress, and personal stories.
- Quick action following staff suggestions and a focus on feedback and incentives to ensure clear appreciation.
- Implementation of a new training portal, allowing greater opportunities for personal development.
- Improved management awareness of staff workloads, stresses, and wellbeing considerations.
- Internal promotions and advancement opportunities offered and delivered on.

We are still focused on continual improvement, particularly with our weak areas where we have identified salient risks, further improvement opportunities, or declining scores. Our target for 2025 will be to attain 90% or higher on all the survey questions, with the addition of better clarification of the questions and the addition of further questions in areas not addressed.



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To improve our survey and our employee's experiences and wellbeing, we have identified that for 2025 we need to develop the following aspects:

- Improve our training and development programme, ensuring all staff have relevant training for their current roles, future aspirations, and for legal compliance. We shall carry out further development of the new Training portal with increased focus and access for staff to complete a range of Health & Safety, HR, Management, Finance, and business improvement training courses.
- Improving our Staff Development reviews and tools to ensure all staff have a consistent and effective experience of the reviews. This will include quicker, digitised forms which can gather data easier, but also support the managers in allocation sufficient time for the reviews through targeted support, close monitoring of progress to 100% completion of reviews on time, and improvement of the questionnaires involving each manager, to ensure the questions and responses will be appropriate, clear, and meaningful.
- Development of the Employee Voice communication pathways, ensuring all staff feel they can engage with the Employee Voice Council, anonymously or otherwise, their thoughts and ideas are considered and answered, and employees are rewarded and supported when raising concerns, grievances, or development opportunities.
- Diversity and Inclusion scored lower than previously measured, showing improved awareness of this issue, but lack of further progress. The recruitment and induction process has been altered to ensure the content, language, and tone of our job adverts is inclusive and supportive of all applications. We will also ensure our interview process supports our diversity and equality policies, by removing or altering any questions, statements, or requirements which may unintentionally exclude or disadvantage and persons from the recruitment process. Hiring managers will complete diversity training to complement this.
- Manageable Workloads and "Switching Off" outside of hours are stubbornly high and is important to employees for their mental health and work-life balance, particularly in Management roles. Greater 2-way discussions in interim SDRs cover employee workloads, wellbeing, and stress to identify issues. We shall also create a regular action point in Management Meetings to allow for raising of concerns when workload becomes too great, or team support may help reduce workload from managers or staff experiencing temporary or permanent workload difficulties.

Social Value

Hardscape are passionate about our Social and Ethical values and are committed to support in any way we can to develop infrastructure, communities, and create amazing spaces for people to enjoy.

Clients and customers are increasingly requesting Social Value metrics to be applied to tender applications, which may be used in the selection process. We believe we should apply Social Value developments, regardless of whether it is requested for a project, part of the tender decision process, or other compliance requirements.

The involvement of Hardscape is mostly design and technical support, logistical administration, and supply of materials prior to project installation. This means that we are not usually able to support with employment of local or disadvantaged labour for the elements of the projects which we are involved, but we aim to maximise all the areas where we can make a difference.

We have a considerable range of paving materials and production capacity available for donation if there is a compatible scheme that may benefit from our excess stored products, also ensuring our spare materials can be used to make a positive environmental contribution.

Our total social value tender projection for 2024-2025 was **£42,224**.

This was a significant increase from the previous year which was only £2,500. This demonstrates a clear commitment to make a difference to communities and people affected by our work.

Community Engagement

We offer our support to be involved in community development projects where we could volunteer time and products to support local initiatives, in conjunction with local action groups, such as development of parks, community gardens, or local facilities in need of repair.

We can support communities with visits and talks about the project benefits and construction site safety. We have DBS checked, qualified trainers who would be available to visit local schools, colleges, and community centres to offer industry specific training, project advice or promotion, and Health & Safety advice where it would be most beneficial. Our staff have been involved in regular volunteering and community support, with Hardscape offering paid volunteer days every year to all staff, which we can advertise or recruit to staff where opportunities are available to give back to our communities.

Many employees give their time and expertise to support local clubs such as Bolton Lads and Girls, local sports teams, and environmental awareness committees.



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Charitable Support

Hardscape has a strong history of financial and awareness support to charities that hold personal resonance with many of our employees. We have a regular charitable Monthly prize draw, where the company gives a matched donation to the charity of the winner's choice.

Our employees carry out fundraising events throughout the year for a wide range of good causes. Hardscape supports these and often matches all employee donations or sponsorships to show our commitment to our employees and the charities they are aiming to help.

We have supported the following charities over the last 12 months:

- Bolton Hospice (Diamond Patrons)
- Bolton Lads & Girls Club
- Movember
- Macmillan Cancer Support (Coffee Morning)
- Save The Children (Xmas Jumper Day 2024)
- Bolton Lions (Christmas Toy Appeal)
- Children In Need
- Andy's Man Club
- Kevin Kay Curling Team (Sponsors)



References and Resources

- Supply Chain Sustainability School: [Home - Supply Chain Sustainability School \(supplychainschool.co.uk\)](http://supplychainschool.co.uk)
- Social Value Portal: [Social Value Portal | Measure, report and amplify your Social Value](http://socialvalueportal.co.uk)
- The Equality Act 2010: [Equality Act 2010 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](http://legislation.gov.uk)
- HSE advice - Stress and Mental Health at Work: [Work-related stress and how to manage it: overview - HSE](http://hse.gov.uk)
- Employee Ownership Trusts: [https://employeeownership.co.uk/](http://employeeownership.co.uk)
- MIND: [https://www.mind.org.uk/](http://www.mind.org.uk)
- Andy's Man Club: [https://andysmanclub.co.uk/](http://andysmanclub.co.uk)
- VIVUP Health & Wellbeing: [https://vivupbenefits.co.uk/solutions#Mental-Wellbeing](http://vivupbenefits.co.uk/solutions#Mental-Wellbeing)