

CASE STUDY



HB Projects

CHAS, the supply chain risk management expert, launches **HB Projects** on their Fairness, Inclusion and Respect (FIR) journey.

HB Projects specialises in delivering new build, fit-out and refurbishment projects for a range of clients across several sectors in the UK.

As a self-styled 'people first' organisation, they pride themselves on being principled and fair. The desire to promote these values more widely led to them becoming the first CHAS client to gain FIR accreditation.



About HB Projects

HB Projects offers a broad range of construction services, from traditional building through to comprehensive design and build solutions and value engineering. With three regional offices, including their HQ in Bradford, they employ around 165 staff.

HB Projects Group includes subsidiaries HBMS Roofing and Cladding and ONYX Project Services. Operating across several market sectors, including retail, automotive, commercial and industrial, HB has worked on projects with big names brands, including ASDA, B&Q, Morrisons, Lidl and IKEA.



CHAS speaks to Beverley Peace, HB Group Compliance Director and Rebecca Ellis, HB Compliance Manager, to find out more about their experience of becoming the first organisation to be awarded the CHAS FIR accreditation and what led them to apply.

Principled Contractors

HB recognises their responsibility to their clients, team members, supply chain, the environment and the communities in which they operate.

They have always considered themselves fair and supportive as an employer and market themselves as Principled Contractors.

HB has long been committed to attracting and keeping women in work with their flexible working approach. Beverley says she is a testament to this as HB's fair and flexible ethos helped to keep her employed when she became a single mother to twins sixteen years ago. With childcare roles increasingly shared this flexibility extends across their workforce.

HB has a longstanding focus on reducing the stigma of mental health issues in the workplace which began in the 2010s when they were going through a management buyout. Recognising this could be an unsettling time for staff, they focused on promoting a psychologically safe work environment to encourage employees to air their worries freely.

HB has also recently doubled down on its efforts to maintain a respectful workplace when, like many other businesses, they found the post-pandemic world had fragmented relationships between employees working across offices, their home, and on-site. A reminder for staff to continue to respect each other was driven by their company values, of which fairness and respect are a key part.

With a fair and supportive ethos and many people-management policies already in place, FIR accreditation was the right fit to bring their efforts together in a single demonstration of how HB conduct themselves as a fair employer.

HB was made aware of the new FIR accreditation, which provides a structured way to develop and embed a culture of fairness, inclusion, and respect within an organisation, through their close relationship with CHAS. HB has worked with CHAS for six years and mandates CHAS Advanced for all their supply chain.

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When we heard about FIR it was everything we wanted in our business, it allowed us to showcase the work we were already doing while giving us a roadmap for the future.

— Beverley Peace, HB Projects, 2022

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As a smaller company, HB opted to initially apply for the first-level accreditation to understand best what they were already doing right, along with establishing future goals.

The assessment comprises an online questionnaire and the completion of a number of employee interviews and HB worked closely with a dedicated CHAS assessor throughout this process with regular catch-ups and information sharing.

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We've always found CHAS to be really easy to work with, so we had no concerns about the process itself, As we have come to expect from CHAS, they provided us with dedicated support personnel who were helpful and responsive at every step of the process.

— Rebecca Ellis, HB Projects, 2022



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The Benefits

As early adopters of the FIR accreditation, HB are proud to be industry-leaders in championing FIR principles. They also believe it has given them a head-start in formalising how they are tackling many of the key FIR themes, such as mental health, that are becoming increasing priorities across supply chains.

Rebecca also believes being able to convey a fair and inclusive ethos greatly benefits recruitment and retention. Attracting new recruits, particularly a younger and more diverse demographic, can be challenging due to the perception of the amount of training and development required in the industry. HB are proud to offer a good apprenticeship scheme which sets trainees up for a strong future and the FIR accreditation enables them to showcase this.

Beverley suggests holding FIR accreditation is also a strong signal that your organisation takes FIR seriously and is committed to continual improvement in this area. With the prevalence of social media, many employers fear that, despite their best efforts, it could take just one disgruntled employee to bring their approach to fairness and inclusivity into question. The CHAS FIR accreditation is evidence that your organisation has a robust and independently verified approach to promoting Fairness, Inclusion & Respect.

As FIR becomes more widely recognised and requested, HB expects to see further benefits to holding the accreditation in terms of its role in helping them to stand out from their competition and win business.

The Future

While it has been a positive exercise for HB to reaffirm the relevant FIR processes and policies they already have, they also have plenty of ideas to work on for the future to strengthen their FIR initiative ahead of their reapplication (FIR accreditation is valid for two years from the date it is awarded).

Working with the CHAS assessor has given HB valuable insight into areas they have previously not thought about, “opening their minds” to different considerations. For example, the accessibility of their website – how important something as simple as style or design is in terms of it being accessible to everyone, as well as the appropriate language required to drive FIR.

Recognising that change does not happen overnight, HB are also looking at forming an FIR steering group to encourage input from all areas of the business, extending the FIR message across their sites and down through their supply chain.

Would HB Recommend FIR Accreditation?

HB are effusive in their recommendation to sign up for FIR accreditation. They feel it has enabled them to assess their current principles with a clear plan to build on them over the coming years to strengthen FIR within the business. *Concludes Beverley: “We’ve got it, and we want to shout about it!”*