



**UK Collaborative on
Development Research**

UKCDR STRATEGY

**The next 3 years
(2022–2025)**



Making research work
for global development

SCOR strategy 2022 - 2025

Who we are

UKCDR was created in 2007 to provide a framework for a **coordinated approach to development research**. Our mission is to **amplify the value and impact of research** by promoting coherence, collaboration and joint action among UK research funders.

In 2015, funding for development research was increased and spread across government departments and research councils. In response, **FCDO, BEIS, DHSC, UKRI** and the **Wellcome Trust** set up a Strategic Coherence for ODA-funded Research (SCOR) Board, which looked to UKCDR to provide data and expertise on maximising impact and value for money from dispersed funding.

What we do

The **SCOR Board** is an advisory mechanism, with significant influence on the strategic delivery of ODA funding. The Board works to ensure that the UK is an influential and effective global player in research for development and that ODA expenditure on science and research achieves maximum impact.

UKCDR's coordination function and development of best practice guidance supports HMG to achieve value for money in development research investments. **UKCDR provides evidence-based information and tools** to inform decision-making and priority setting amongst UK funders.

Recent achievements

Health - When COVID-19 hit, UKCDR set up a live database of funded research projects across the world related to the pandemic. The tracker is the most comprehensive database of its kind and was described as “instrumental in reaching global funding decisions” in the WHO Overall Achievements Report. This is now being developed into a pandemic preparedness tool to guide future investments.

Country-level Mapping - UKCDR supports funder coordination at the country-level, mapping the combined impact of UK research investments across departments and funders. UKCDR is developing its database of ODA-funded research projects including outcomes and impact, with the option for tailored country-level reports, to support Heads of Missions with evidence-based decisions.

What we will do 2022 to 2025 - highlights

Impact - We will evidence the effectiveness, value for money and impact of the UK's investment in international development research. Currently we are analysing REF2021 impact case studies to identify the impact of international development research on the UK and our LMIC partners.

Research enablers - The International Development Strategy (2022) recognises the benefit of equitable partnerships both to the UK and LMICs. UKCDR will continue its work on equitable partnerships by giving UK funders the tools to invest in research partnerships that are likely to have the most impact on development outcomes.

Effective funding mechanisms - We are working across UK funders to produce lessons learnt from past ODA R&D large funds. This work will support HMG and UK funders to maximise the impact of research for development by ensuring funding is structured in the most effective and efficient way.

Climate - We will continue mapping and analysing climate change research, convening researchers and providing funders with high quality information to support better coordination.

Introduction

In March 2022, UKCDR developed a new strategy for the period 2022-2025. We aim to position UKCDR in the research landscape as a generator and repository of knowledge and good practice to achieve **our vision to accelerate global development through the power of research and knowledge**.

Our mission is to **amplify the value and impact of research by promoting coherence, collaboration and joint action among UK funders**. We aim to become a generator and repository of knowledge to support and enable the development of an evidence-based transdisciplinary ecosystem for development research to address the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

To meet the strategic priorities as set by the Strategic Coherence for ODA Research (SCOR) Board, the UKCDR strategy leans on **3 pillars**:



Mapping, analysis
& foresight



Convening for
joint action



Sharing
information &
best practice



These pillars all feed into our **overarching ambition to use our expertise and collective voice** to:

- identify where UK research for development has been effective and shown **value for money**,
- identify the **overall impact of the UK's investment** in research for development,
- **bridge the gap** between “what” is funded and “how” it is delivered (Fig. 1),
- **increase our impact** by working with a range of influential funding bodies and foster relationships with core users: the academic research community (UK and international) and the international development community,
- **foster dialogue**, draw on complementary skills, initiate discussions and ensure representation and understanding of our international stakeholders' needs and priorities to jointly address global challenges.

UKCDR – A snapshot

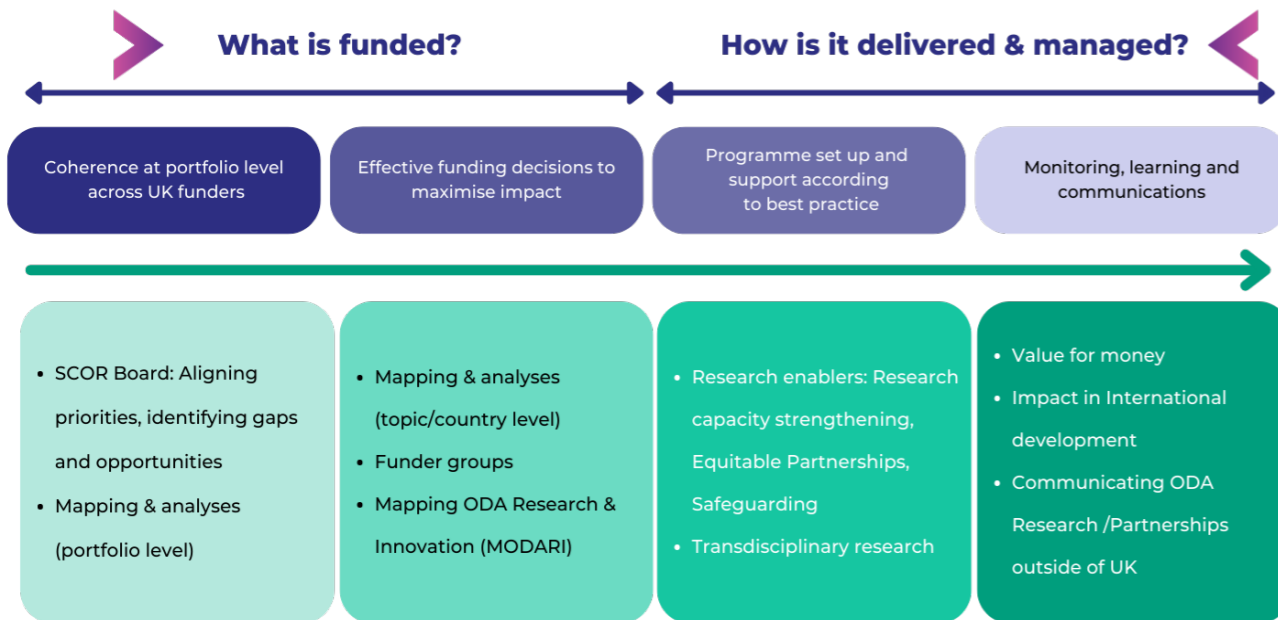


Figure 1: Bridging the gap between “what” is funded and “how” it is delivered

WHAT'S NEW IN THIS STRATEGY?

- New Theory of Change including the enablers needed for UKCDR to achieve its role and ambitions
- More prominent role for the collective voice of an organisation renowned for its neutrality
- Tangible outcomes and outputs to deliver real impact
- Set of principles to prioritise UKCDR areas of focus

Who we are

We are a dedicated team of experts working to amplify the impact and value of UK’s research investment to address global challenges through mapping, improving best practices, coherence and joint action.

We support government and research funders working in international development. Our core contributing members include:



Our stakeholders include the UK and international research community, research funding delivery partners, UK academies, and the philanthropic and private sectors.

Our vision

Accelerated global development through the power of research and knowledge.

Our mission

We exist to amplify the value and impact of research for global development by promoting coherence, collaboration and joint action among UK research funders.

Our governance

The SCOR Board

UKCDR is a neutral and impartial entity, governed by and providing the secretariat for the HMG Strategic Coherence for ODA-funded Research (SCOR) Board.

The 2015 UK Aid Strategy and comprehensive spending review spread and increased funding on development research across more government departments and research councils. In response, four Government Departments and the Wellcome Trust set up the SCOR Board, which looked to UKCDR to respond to this increased and more dispersed funding.

The SCOR Board is an advisory mechanism, chaired by independent member Marie Staunton, with significant influence on the strategic delivery of ODA funding. Drawing upon the skills and perspectives of the major funders represented on the Board by their respective Chief Scientific Advisors, alongside the Director of the Wellcome Trust, and a number of independent members from across the UK and Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs), it ensures that research funding coordination is impactful and that the UK provides a strong voice of leadership to the international development research community.

Strategic objectives 2022-2025

Impact will be at the core of UKCDR's strategy for the period 2022-2025. We will use our evidence and collective voice:

- internally, to the funders we represent, to highlight the impact that research has had on international development over the last decade,
- externally, to the academic community, nationally and internationally, and all the users of research, to maintain a coordinated approach to research.

We will identify where UK research for development has been effective and demonstrated value for money, and how research and knowledge can accelerate global development. We aim to identify the overall impact of the UK's investment in international development research to:

- develop and communicate an understanding of where, when and why development research is needed,
- help inform coherence, and
- increase the effectiveness of research outcomes, helping to support the establishment of an evidence-based transdisciplinary ecosystem for international development research.

Mapping, Convening and Sharing information remain our three main pillars. The difference with the previous strategy is that those pillars all feed into one overarching activity: the collective voice to showcase how research and knowledge can accelerate global development, what works and how coordination among funders ensures effectiveness.

As a neutral entity, UKCDR does not have an advocacy role, but provide funders, cross-department, with the data necessary to make evidence-informed decisions.

By Mapping, Convening and Sharing information, we:

- provide the tools to support leadership and coordination, and inform decision-making and coherent priority setting amongst funders,
- provide the models, data analysis and best practice guidance to support the practitioners of research and the academic community.

This is the added-value of UKCDR to the SCOR Board and to our wider stakeholder community. This is how our collective voice should be understood and assessed.

Theory of change

UKCDR's review

An independent review of UKCDR was commissioned by FCDO in 2021 to reflect on the past strategic period (2018-21) and provide recommendations for the next three years. It highlighted that UKCDR “has achieved a great deal since 2018 in delivering its work programme and within limited resources”, and that **UKCDR is perceived as a trusted convenor with a reputation for high performance, quality and timeliness of its outputs. Synthesis and insight pieces on cross-cutting issues such as safeguarding were highlighted as being of particular value to stakeholders.**

The recommendations provided from the review have informed the development of this strategy.

Criteria for prioritisation of UKCDR new areas of work

With limited resources and a vast landscape to survey, UKCDR is conscious that to deliver on our ambitious new strategy, we will **need to prioritise our areas of work** and **foster partnerships to create joint outputs.** We will consider potential partnerships with existing structures involved in science policy, research, and international development.

Together with the SCOR board, we have developed a series of prioritisation principles taking into account the timeliness of issues to explore and the internal resources available.

To be in scope, any new area of interest will need to:

- cut across several disciplines and funders (e.g. COVID-19, climate change),
- be linked to the SCOR/UKCDR strategic priority areas,
- not already be well coordinated by other organisations,
- be linked to a UK funding or decision-making process.

More emphasis will be given to areas which 1) are new and emerging with the possibility of gaps in funding or duplication, 2) will benefit from a step increase in funding or research, 3) encompass both blue sky and applied research and 4) where funders and LMIC governments have an interest in mapping impact.

A new, more intuitive Theory of Change has been developed for the new strategy period. It highlights the enablers needed for UKCDR to achieve its role and ambitions, a more prominent role for the collective voice of an organisation that is renowned for its neutrality, alongside tangible outcomes and outputs.

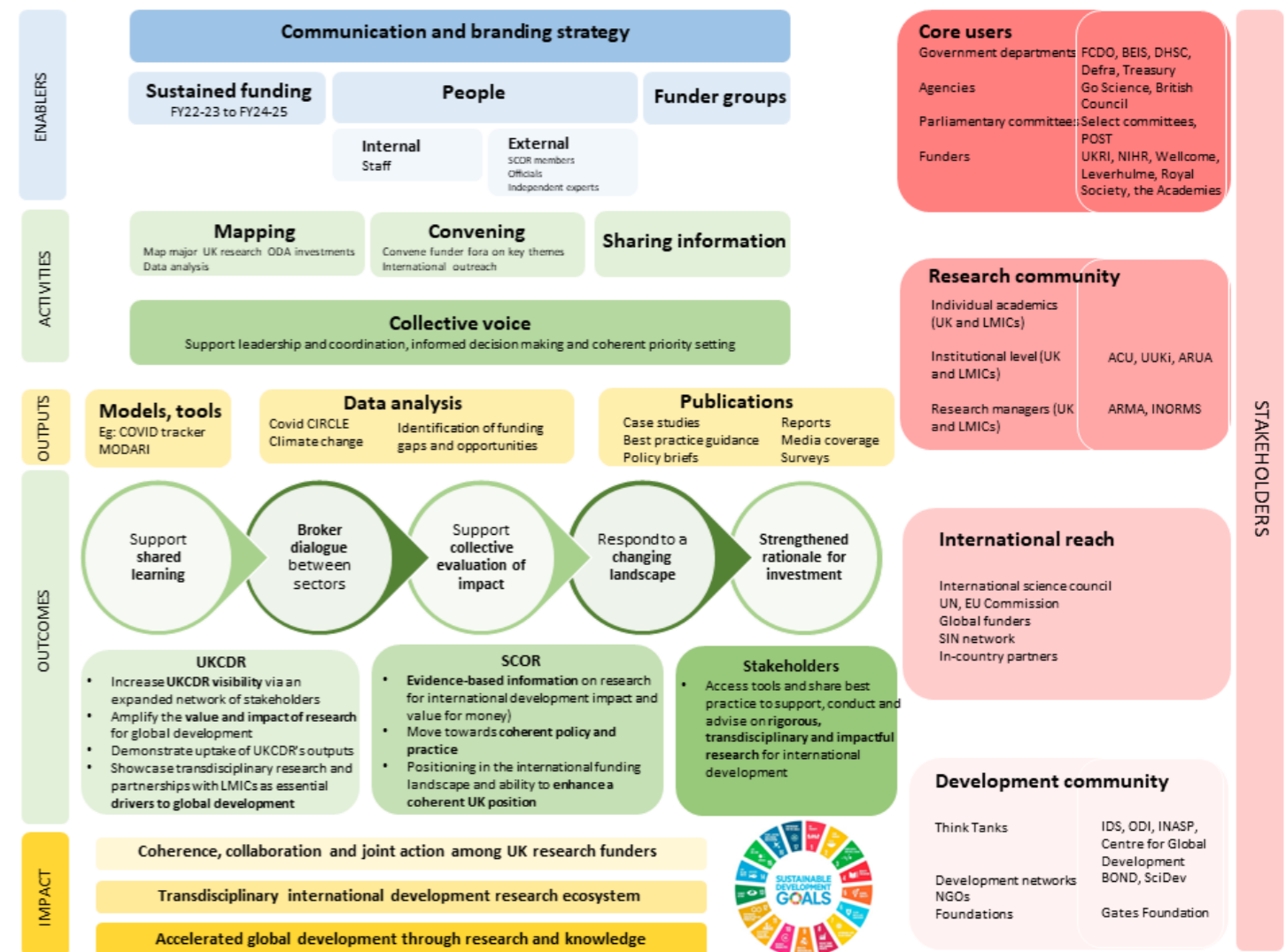


Figure 2: UKCDR 3-year Theory of Change - 2022-25

Enablers of success

The enablers are the conditions or factors that need to be in place to allow an organisation or project to succeed.

We have identified 3 distinctive enablers needed for UKCDR to deliver on the strategic objectives as agreed with the SCOR Board. While our Communication strategy is the underpinning enabler, UKCDR could not effectively and efficiently carry out its mission without the support of People and Funder groups.

Communication strategy

UKCDR communications capabilities have widely supported the delivery and dissemination of our activities, drawing together and sustaining engagement of a very wide stakeholder community. We will develop and implement a communication strategy with the aim to widen our stakeholder engagement, by appropriately targeting a wider range of funding and delivery actors, within the UK and internationally.

We will proactively seek engagement with international funders' networks to increase our impact and visibility. Beyond reaching out to funders, we will also proactively engage with practitioners, in particular the academic community, the research management community and the users of research.

Funder groups

The funder groups have been set up for members and stakeholders to work collaboratively to highlight gap or opportunity areas and to reduce the risk of duplication. We will review our funder groups (thematic and membership) to ensure that we cover a range of themes linked to the international research development landscape and relevant to the UN SDGs and the Board strategic interests.

People

The core of our activity revolves around our three pillars: mapping, convening and sharing information. To perform those activities to the high standard UKCDR is known for, we need to ensure we can build a resilient organisation with improved hierarchy and mid-term stability, allowing for career progression and personal development.

Regarding our Governance structure, UKCDR will work collaboratively with SCOR and the Officials to establish a protocol for proportionate, better integrated, and more consistent communications on issues of strategic foresight.

Mapping, analysis and foresight



Together with the SCOR Board, we have developed a series of prioritisation principles taking into account the timeliness of issues to explore and the internal resources available. UKCDR maintains a strong focus on data mapping, analysis and foresight. This commitment to drive our strategic activities from a place of knowledge, analysis and evidence underpins each area we work in.

To achieve greater coherence, we need to facilitate funders' joint understanding of their activities and priorities, and how these fit within the wider international development research landscape.

In line with the previous strategy and acknowledging the strengths of UKCDR, we will continue to:

- coordinate the collection of standardised information on what is being funded and where it is being invested. We will work with our members and wider stakeholders to obtain a comprehensive picture of the UK's ODA research investments,
- analyse information on research investments to identify strategic gaps that require new research, opportunities for synergy, complementarity and joint working, and avoid duplication,
- work with the research community in the UK and internationally to identify future global trends to inform and direct investments.

Convening for collaboration and joint action



Over the course of this next strategy period, we will continue to:

- convene **funder groups** on key themes,
- facilitate the cross-pollination of the funder groups,
- be **inclusive** of all research disciplines,
- link up the research community with public, private and philanthropic sectors, to draw on different perspectives and expertise and
- expand our reach and networks.

UKCDR will continue holding annual stakeholder meetings as part of its convening role, on a variety of cross-cutting issues. Those gatherings are open widely to funders, academics, and NGOs with the aim to draw on the complementary skills of our UK members and wider international stakeholders. We aim to provide a forum to initiate discussions, broker dialogue between sectors and support our stakeholders to work collaboratively and in partnership for joint action to address global challenges.

Sharing information, learning and best practice



To maximise the impact of research investments for international development, we must take advantage of the lessons learnt and consider the context in which we are working to ensure we are applying best practice to achieve global outcomes for the future.

Over the next strategic period, we will focus on **impact and transdisciplinarity**.

We will consider the impact of UKCDR in terms of its mission to amplify the value and impact of research for global development by promoting coherence, collaboration and joint action among UK research funders.

With the publication of the REF2021 (Research Excellence Framework) results and building on the legacy work done by UKCDS on the previous iteration of the REF in 2014, we will highlight examples of the impact of international development research (ODA or non-ODA funded). It will provide and communicate evidence of a narrative around the need for and importance of international development research and support the funders' decision-making process in future funding models.

In approaching complex challenges, research requires increased transdisciplinarity and coproduction of knowledge and outputs alongside equitable and mutually respectful partnerships. Using the REF2021 as an opportunity, we will showcase best practice examples and work on a guidance on "how to" conduct transdisciplinary research including non-academic stakeholders in the process of knowledge production and uptake of research. This will also inform funders' decision-making process regarding future funding models for international development research.

Being a collective voice to shape policy



Our main strategic objective over the period 2022-2025, will be to use our evidence and collective voice to inform research for development decisions in the following ways:

- **internally**, to the funders we represent, to identify the impact that research has had on international development over the last decade,
- **externally**, to the academic community, nationally and internationally, and all the users of research, to maintain a coordinated approach to research.

Research across disciplines and in partnership with LMICs is essential to drive global development progress. All too often, research is produced in niche disciplinary spaces and framed for very specific audiences. We need to bring together funders, researchers and research users. We will increase our collective voice by showcasing how research and knowledge accelerate global development to a range of influential bodies, academia (UK and international) and policy-making organisations.

We will increase the impact of our collective voice by increasing our international reach (academia, policy), and ensuring our work is relevant and accessible to our stakeholders in LMICs. We will involve them in the production of outputs and guidance documents and investigate the need to translate the documents we produce.

Key outputs & outcomes

Our outputs and the outcomes they facilitate are one of UKCDR's strengths. We will continue our mapping work through the Mapping ODA Research and Innovation project (MODARI – see below), the COVID CIRCLE initiative will be integrated into a wider pandemic tool (developed with GloPID-R). We will continue to focus on research enablers and other areas of work, including: the impact of research for international development, climate change, lessons learnt from the evaluation of large funds, alongside ad-hoc requests for evidence and analysis from the SCOR Board.

The UKCDR strategy has been developed to encompass elements of flexibility and responsiveness. We have delivered outputs by fostering partnerships within existing structures involved in science policy, research, and international development, to create joint outputs. We have done this successfully with ESSENCE on Health Research (Guidance on Equitable Partnerships) and GloPID-R (COVID CIRCLE), and we will keep exploring partnerships.

By seeking complementarities and synergies with partners, aligning with the research funding landscape, and based on the newly established principles with SCOR to prioritise areas of work, we will diversify the focus of our activities and explore outputs in some of the following areas.

- **Impact:** to showcase examples of rigorous, robust and high quality international development research, irrespective of the funding source. Highlight the quality, effectiveness, value for money and impact of the UK's investment in international development research,
- **Climate change:** we will work with partners to understand the UK research funding commitments to the climate change agenda with specific emphasis on adaptation and mitigation in LMICs,
- **Pandemic preparedness:** building on the success of the COVID CIRCLE project, we will support the development of a broader pandemic preparedness tool in collaboration with GloPID-R.

MODARI – Mapping ODA Research and Innovation aims at improving the availability and consistency of data on ODA-funded research and innovation across UK government funders and implementing partners. It has three specific areas of focus: funding calls, funded projects and results. The output is a public resource designed for a wide range of stakeholders:

- **Country-based development staff** – to find projects with a local focus or involving local partners,
- **ODA data analysts in government** – to see R&I portfolios mapped in a single place and download data,
- **Research institutions** – to look for existing projects on a thematic area to inform research planning.

Research enablers

At UKCDR, we believe that the way we conduct research is really important. We have provided funders and the research community with resources on safeguarding, research capacity strengthening, and equitable partnerships. We produce evidence-based information in different formats that inform the work of our stakeholders: lessons learnt reports and good practice guidance, policy briefing and case studies. We will continue to work with funders and the research community, nationally and internationally, alongside the users of research, to:

- enhance understanding of research enablers, and
- disseminate our findings to support the growth of a transdisciplinary research ecosystem for international development research.

COVID CIRCLE – COVID-19 Research Coordination & Learning – was launched in April 2020 by UKCDR and the Global Research Collaboration for Infectious Disease Preparedness (GloPID-R) in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We track and analyse global COVID-19 research investments. The initiative aligns and strengthens the global effort on COVID-19 research in resource-limited settings by providing: a joint principles approach, the identification of research priorities for LMICs and, mapping and analysis of funding. The COVID-19 Research Project Tracker is the most comprehensive database of its kind and has been “instrumental in reaching global funding decisions” (WHO Overall Achievements Report). Researcher-level cooperation is enabled through communities of practice, facilitating learning for funders and researchers through embedded learning and evaluation, including a review of the research process, the funding process and impact evaluation. As COVID-19 research is integrated into standard funding mechanisms, in 2023 the COVID CIRCLE initiative will evolve and the COVID Tracker will become part of the Pandemic PACT project, shifting to more internationally focused activities tackling a range of epidemic and pandemic-prone diseases.

Our values & principles

The following values govern the way we work:



WE ASPIRE TO

Connect powerfully

- Harnessing the diversity of our thinking and approaches
- Enabling and driving collaboration to find better solutions
- Backing each other to deliver to our best
- Sharing our knowledge, networks and expertise to empower others

Drive positive change

- Ambition and determination to make a real impact in the world
- A positive role model and motivator for others
- Taking pride in and communicating our accomplishments
- Celebrating each other and our overall successes

Think freely

- Freedom to deliver great work, and holding ourselves accountable
- Challenging and encouraging others to explore new opportunities
- Confident to create our own material and have a voice
- Agile and nimble in our approach, always open to new ideas

Act with purpose

- Outcomes focused, drive to deliver outstanding results for our stakeholders
- Pragmatic and useful in everything we do
- Empathy and understanding about what is really needed
- A desire to go the extra mile

Our strategy aligns to the UK's International Development Strategy and the UN Goals for Sustainable Development





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