

Ulster Supported Employment Limited

Strategic Plan 2022-2027

February 2022





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1. INTRODUCTION

Who We Are

The Company, formerly known as Ulster Sheltered Employment Limited, was incorporated on 16 March 1962 to fulfil an act of Parliament by providing supported paid employment for disabled people. In 1980, the Company acquired the Workshops for the Blind (The Belfast Association for the Employment of the Industrious Blind), which was established in 1871 to provide employment for the visually impaired. On 25 September 1998, the Company was renamed to **Ulster Supported Employment Limited**, as it is known today.

USEL is an Arm's Length Body (specifically a Non-Departmental Public Body, that operates under the direction of the Department for Communities ("DfC"), and in particular on a day-to-day basis the Strategic Employment Branch.

What We Do

USEL provides a wide range of services to people with disabilities or health conditions.

We exist solely to help people with disabilities and health-related conditions move into and sustain employment. Every year we employ, support and train over 1200 people with disabilities or health conditions across Northern Ireland.

We offer a range of learning programmes to help people get into employment and offer support to employers for our clients.



Our Future

The last 18 months have brought significant challenges to individuals, communities and organisations across Northern Ireland. However, USEL has continued to provide an exceptional services to clients and customers.

This Strategic Plan aims to build on the achievements of the past by setting out the key themes for the next 5 years enabling us to achieve our vision of being the **lead provider in helping people with disabilities or health conditions gain employment.**

MANUFACTURING & RECYCLING DEPARTMENT

Bedding
Industrial Sewing
Circular Economy
Confidential Shredding
Fulfilment

53
Staff

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Training for Success
TfS Disability Support
STRIDE
Workable
Employment Support
Ability Cafes

82
Staff

CORPORATE SERVICE DEPARTMENT

Human Resources
IT
Marketing
Finance

29
Staff

2. MAKING A DIFFERENCE

“

For every £1 invested in USEL services in 2020/21 a social return of around £18 was achieved

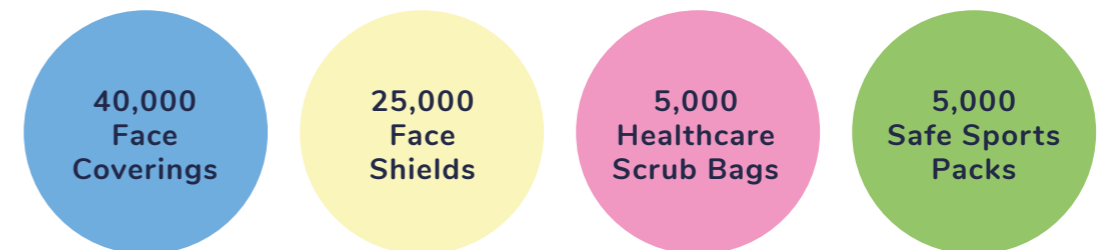
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2.1. Each year, USEL commissions an independent study to measure its social impact. The study uses the Social Return on Investment (SROI) methodology to measure USEL's social impact.

2.2. The 2020/21 report highlighted how USEL has made a difference to the people it serves and civil society.



2.3. USEL was honoured in the 2020 Social Enterprise UK Roll of Honour for our outstanding work supporting front line workers during the Covid pandemic by providing PPE showing our ability to react, adapt and innovate.



2.4. In early 2021, USEL was awarded one of the first tender opportunities reserved for organisations whose main aim is supporting disabled and disadvantaged people in the workforce by the Department of Finance.

3. CONTEXT

- 3.1. As an Arm's Length Body, USEL is committed to supporting DfC and wider government strategies and policies.
- 3.2. The Strategic Plan therefore complements the Draft Programme for Government Outcomes Framework 2021, DfC's Building Inclusive Communities Strategy 2020-2025 and DfC's Disability Actions Plan 2020-2024.
- 3.3. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. For the first time the draft NI Programme for Government references the SDGs with intention that the Outcomes Framework will be their way to demonstrate progress towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals ("SDGs"). The Strategic Plan is cognisant of these SDGs.

DRAFT PFG OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK 2021

- Everyone can reach their potential
- We have an equal and inclusive society where everyone is valued and treated with respect
- We have a caring society that supports people throughout their lives

DFC: 'BUILDING INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES STRATEGY 2020-2025' (2020)

- Anti-poverty
- Wellbeing & Inclusion
- Sustainability and Inclusive Growth
- Agility & Innovation

DFC: 'DISABILITY ACTION PLAN 2020-2024'

- To promote positive attitudes towards disabled people
- To encourage participation by disabled people in public life

AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- Quality Education
- Decent work and economic growth
- Industry, innovation and infrastructure
- Reduced Inequalities
- Responsible consumption and production



4. PURPOSE, VALUES AND BEHAVIOURS

- 4.1. USEL's Purpose, Values and Vision underpin this Strategic Plan and reinforce USEL's commitment to support people with disabilities or health conditions to gain employment. They also align with DfC's common purpose of "making this a great place to live for **everybody** by **supporting people**, building communities, shaping places".

OUR PURPOSE

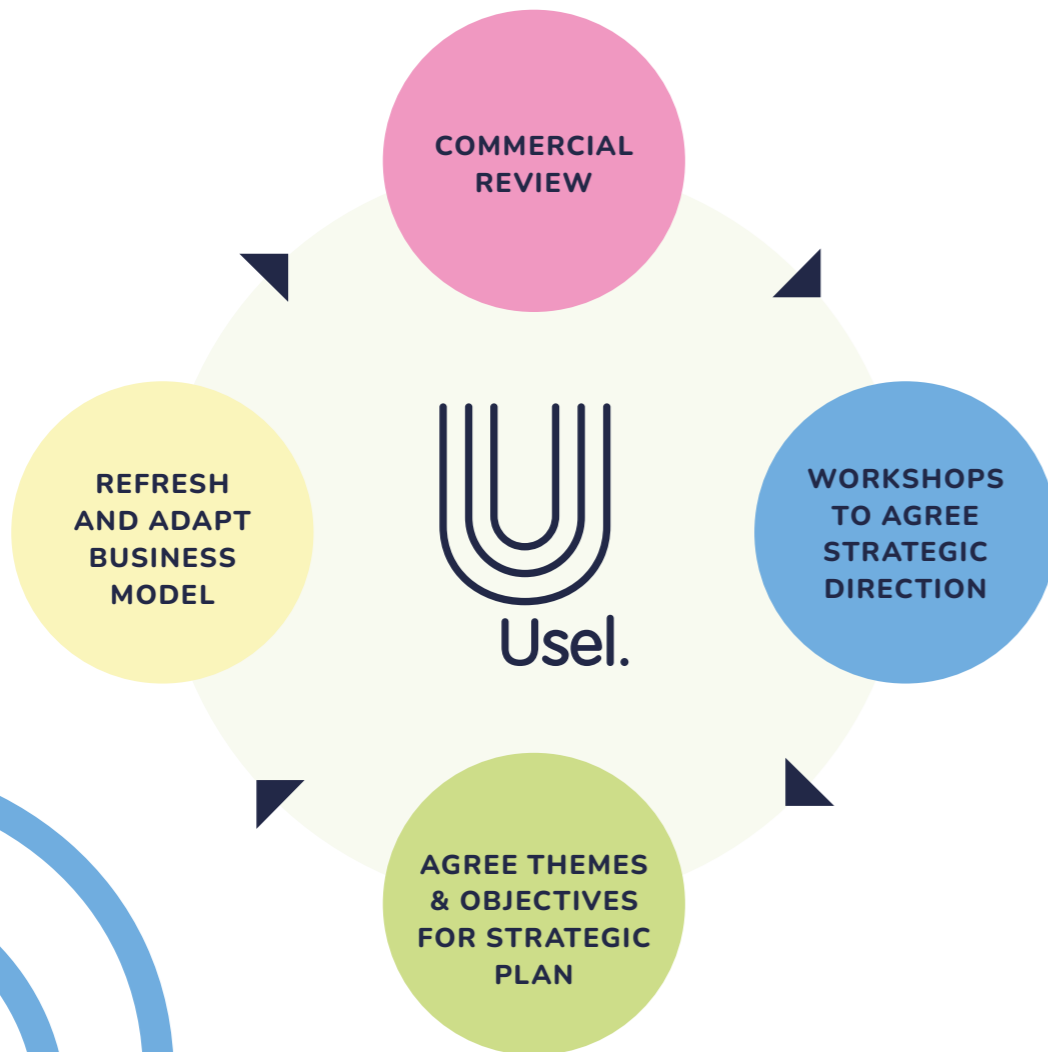
We are a social enterprise born to assist people with disabilities and health related conditions into employment

OUR VALUES AND BEHAVIOURS



5. PLANNING APPROACH

- 5.1.** As an initial step in this process, a baseline commercial review of the business was undertaken. The review put forward recommendations based on the findings in respect of each income stream and the operation of the business generally, along with potential impacts, risks and other considerations in relation to each recommendation.
- 5.2.** Workshops were then held with management and the Board of Directors to discuss the recommendations and agree the strategic direction of USEL.
- 5.3.** A strategic roadmap was developed by management and the Board of Directors which built on the Purpose, Values and Behaviours to develop strategic themes and objectives for USEL over the five-year period from 2022 to 2027.
- 5.4.** Over the life of the Strategic Plan, USEL will refresh and adapt its business model to achieve the agreed strategic objectives for the next 5 years.

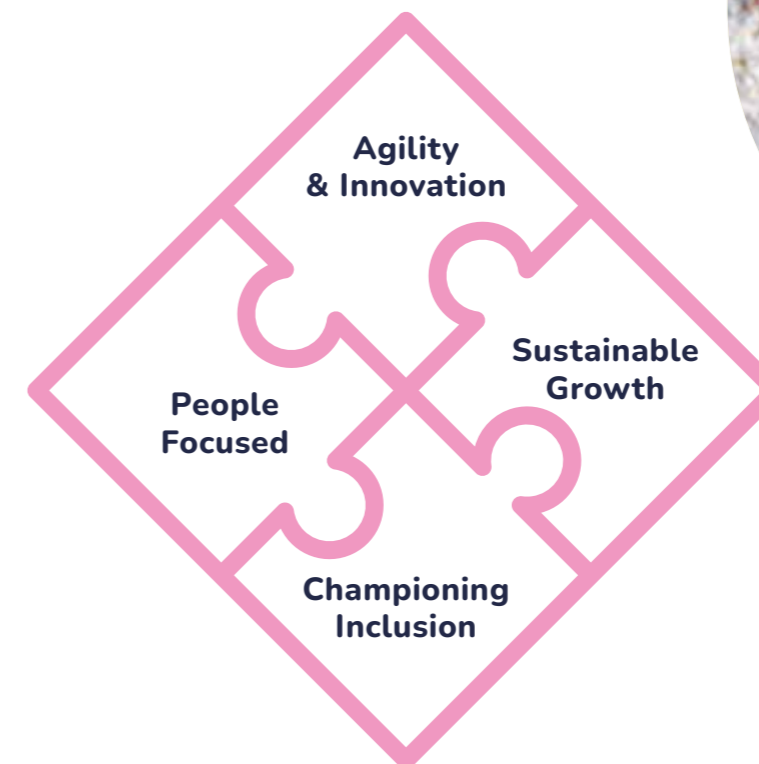


6. STRATEGIC VISION

- 6.1.** As USEL is an Arm's Length Body within DfC, it is important that the USEL and DfC's objectives are aligned so both parties can work in partnership to achieve their common goals. The Cross-Cutting Themes identified in DfC's Building Inclusive Communities Strategy 2020-2025 that are relevant to USEL are:



- 6.2.** The strategic vision for USEL is a culmination of USEL's purpose and values, the findings of the baseline commercial review and is closely linked with the themes from the DfC strategy.
- 6.3.** The Themes for USEL's Strategic Plan are interdependent and cannot be achieved in isolation:



6. STRATEGIC VISION CONT.

6.4. In order to be able to achieve success, the Strategic Themes noted above must be crystallised into objectives and meaningful activities. USEL has developed a road map for the Strategy which brings together the Purpose, Values and Behaviours and Themes into defined objectives to be achieved over the life of this plan.



PURPOSE

We are a social enterprise born to assist people with disabilities or health conditions into employment

VALUES AND BEHAVIOURS

- We Champion Ability
- We Love What We Do
- We Grow Together
- We Make a Difference

THEMES

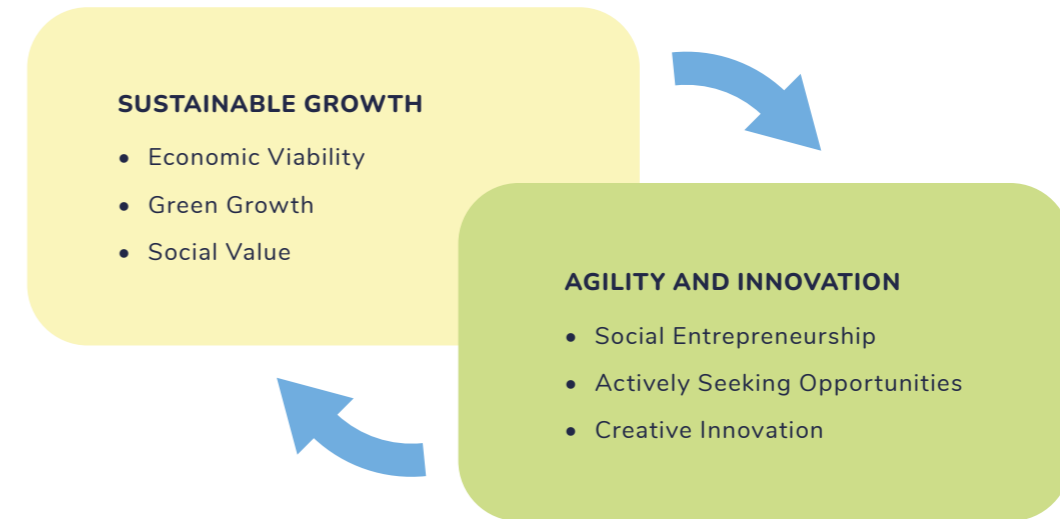
- Agility and Innovation
- Sustainable Growth
- People Focused
- Championing Inclusion

OBJECTIVES

- Economically and environmentally sustainable
- Lead provider of disability employment in Northern Ireland
- Successfully championing inclusion in the workplace
- Partner of choice for Department for Communities

7. THEMES: SUSTAINABLE GROWTH, AGILITY & INNOVATION

7.1. As a social enterprise, USEL recognises the need to continually reinvent and renew its activities to remain current and capitalise on new opportunities. The Themes of **Sustainable Growth and Agility and Innovation** will enable USEL to do this.



7.2. Under the Agility and Innovation theme, Social entrepreneurship is at the heart of everything USEL does and includes investigating new lines of business to create meaningful employment for people with disabilities.

7.3. Actively seeking opportunities will allow USEL to quickly react to the environment and reinvent its activities which includes acting as a social disruptor to create opportunities for the people we serve.

7.4. Creative innovation reflects the importance of USEL continuing to embrace the digital agenda including; paperless working, remote working, virtual learning and new HR and finance systems.

7.5. USEL wants to grow in a sustainable manner. Under this theme, Economic Viability of all business activities is vital to ensure that USEL can continue to assist the people it serves.

7.6. Green growth will focus on developing viable opportunities within the circular economy.

7.7. Social value will include demonstrating how USEL makes a difference, through our annual Social Return on Investment study and utilising appropriate measures like numbers of jobs created, people into employment and environmental impact.

OBJECTIVE

To become economically and environmentally sustainable

7. SUSTAINABLE GROWTH, AGILITY & INNOVATION CONT.

ALIGNMENT WITH DfC STRATEGY



SUSTAINABILITY & INCLUSIVE GROWTH

Outcome:

We support **citizens and communities** by working with them in **achieving their maximum potential** through a range of economic, cultural and environmental interventions such as **increasing work opportunities for citizens**

Priorities:

- Increased labour market & wider societal participation
- Sustainability & Green Growth



AGILITY & INNOVATION

Outcome:

We set clear targets, we have in place **strong and collaborative delivery** structures, **maximising technology**, maintaining and **enhancing skills**.

Priorities:

- Increased channels & technology
- Optimised financial & asset management
- Empowered workforce, enhanced skills

HOW WILL WE ACHIEVE OUR OBJECTIVE?

To become economically and environmentally sustainable

ACTIVITIES

- Consolidate manufacturing
- Explore new service lines
- Grow Ability Cafes
- Consolidate and grow Employment Services

8. THEME: PEOPLE FOCUSED

OBJECTIVE

To become the lead provider of disability employment in NI

8.1. USEL is a people centred organisation that adds value through respect for others and commitment to excellence. The Theme of **People Focused** will enable USEL to achieve this.

Becoming an Employer of Choice involves:

- Being an attractive place to work
- Developing a culture of entrepreneurship and encouraging our people to continually challenge themselves
- Providing appropriate training and development opportunities to equip people with the skills and mindsets that reflect the organisation's values

Stakeholder engagement will involve working closely with employers and other key stakeholders to promote the interests of the people we serve

We will develop Collaborative Partnerships with government departments to help the people we serve fulfil their ambitions and achieve their potential

PEOPLE FOCUSED

- Employer of Choice
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Collaborative Partnerships

ALIGNMENT WITH DfC STRATEGY



AGILITY & INNOVATION

Outcome:

We drive performance with **the citizen at the heart of all that we do**.

Priorities:

- Customer focused services
- Collaboration and partnerships with our ALB's



WELLBEING & INCLUSION

Outcome:

We help **everyone** within our communities live positive, fulfilled lives surrounded by diverse **opportunities to work**, enjoy themselves and get involved

Priorities:

- Increased labour market & wider societal participation

HOW WILL WE ACHIEVE OUR OBJECTIVE?

Lead provider of disability employment in NI

ACTIVITY

- Develop and implement people plan

9. THEME: CHAMPIONING INCLUSION

OBJECTIVE

To successfully champion inclusion in the workplace
To be the partner of choice for the Department for Communities

9.1. We recognise the importance of championing inclusion within the organisation and influencing policy to enable inclusion throughout our society. This Theme of **Championing Inclusion** incorporates a number of aspects:

Influencing policy is an area where USEL can be proactive through becoming a thought leader in areas relevant to the people we serve based on our lived experience influencing policy makers for positive change

Educating and raising awareness by explaining and demonstrating to wider audiences how USEL makes a difference

Becoming a Partner of Choice aims to facilitating direct delivery of relevant government and other strategies.

CHAMPIONING INCLUSION

- Influencing Policy
- Becoming a partner of choice
- Educating and raising awareness

ALIGNMENT WITH DfC STRATEGY



SUSTAINABILITY & INCLUSIVE GROWTH

Outcome: We support citizens and communities by working with them in achieving their **maximum potential** through a range of **economic, cultural and environmental interventions** such as **increasing work opportunities** for citizens.

Priorities:

- Increased labour market & wider societal participation



WELLBEING & INCLUSION

Outcome: We help **everyone** within our communities live positive, fulfilled lives surrounded by **diverse opportunities to work**, enjoy themselves and get involved. This supports **physical and mental health** at an individual and community-level.

Priorities:

- Social Inclusion Strategies
- Increased labour market & wider societal participation

HOW WILL WE ACHIEVE OUR OBJECTIVE?

To successfully champion inclusion in the workplace

To be the partner of choice for the Department for Communities

ACTIVITY

- Develop and implement communication and engagement plan

10. ENABLERS FOR STRATEGY

10.1. There are a number of enablers that will support USEL in achieving the objectives set out in this strategy.

Develop Cambrai Street Site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cambrai Street site is an important enabler for the direct employment related activities delivered by USEL
Pension consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out pension consultation to reduce additional pension deficit due to future accrual of benefits
Remain within budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to have robust financial management to ensure economic viability based on commercial income and funding
Embrace the digital agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use technology to improve processes including HR and Finance systems • Flexibility to allow remote working where appropriate
Partnership agreement with DfC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to work collaboratively with DfC to grow opportunities and promote synergy • Partnership agreement provides vehicle to do this

11. RISKS & MITIGATIONS

11.1. A number of potential barriers to achieving the objectives in this Strategic Plan have been identified.

11.2. These risks along with the potential mitigations are summarised below.

RISKS	MITIGATIONS
Potential redundancies associated with redesign of activities	Implement compulsory redundancies only as a last resort Create alternative roles through new service lines
Impact of pension deficit on financial viability of organisation	Ongoing discussions with DfC on pension deficit
Potential legal obligations associated with long-standing employment support schemes	Seek appropriate legal advice having due regard for emerging case law
Expiry of existing Employment Services contracts	Discussion with DfC re extending existing contracts Submission for new tenders
Risk appetite restricts volume and variety of new service lines	Only explore opportunities/contracts with the potential to generate sufficient volume to ensure long term viability Consider risk appetite when reviewing partnership agreement with DfC
Unable to capitalise on opportunities to grow Ability Cafes	Explore flexible delivery models Carry out research to obtain market intelligence Discussion with DfC on investment strategy and how to overcome potential lease restrictions

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