

A photograph of three construction workers on a lift platform, working on a building. They are wearing hard hats, safety glasses, and high-visibility vests. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent teal and blue gradient. The background shows a road and some greenery.

# Making the Difference Safely

*Health, Safety & Wellbeing Strategy 2022 - 2025*

# Executive Summary from our CEO

## Making the Difference Safely



Vertas Group brings together Facilities Management, Design and Property Consultancy and Recruitment Solutions. Our passion is driven by putting colleagues and customers at the heart of everything we do.

*At Vertas Group we are fully committed to providing a safe and healthy work environment for colleagues, clients and others who are associated with our work activities. The Health, Safety and Wellbeing of our colleagues influences every decision we make and is a fundamental thread that runs throughout the organisation.*

Our Health, Safety and Wellbeing strategy '**Making the Difference Safely**' has been developed to support the company's key values, strategic business planning and People Strategy.

This strategy has been devised to engage colleagues to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our health and safety integrated management system, to deliver a safer and healthier work environment for all those engaging with us, and to encourage and enable a positive, sustainable, safety culture through our SAFE objectives.

The Board of directors will measure the Groups progress and achievements against the strategic plan to ensure we are delivering on what we have set out to achieve.

Yours sincerely,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ian Surtees'.

**Ian Surtees MBA**  
*Group Chief Executive Officer*



# Our Accreditations



# Introduction

*Vertas Group brings together Facilities Management, Design and Property Consultancy and Recruitment Solutions delivering 'customer first' services in cleaning, catering, security, energy management, environmental, education management, grounds and landscapes, reception and concierge, passenger transport, courier and postal as well as building design services, surveying, and property management services, temporary recruitment, senior and interim executive recruitment and permanent recruitment solutions. The company employs over 4,000 colleagues and is made up of the following companies and services.*

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# Our Purpose

“ Vertas Group’s Health, Safety and Wellbeing strategy ‘Making the Difference Safely’ has been developed to support the company’s key values, strategic business planning and People Strategy. ”

“ This document maps out the strategic direction for health, safety and wellbeing for the next three years, in that it details how Vertas Group intends to organise itself in a planned, systematic way to maintain legal compliance as a minimum and promote a positive, sustainable safety culture to continually improve performance. ”

# Position Statement

*Vertas Group has continued to grow exponentially over the last several years. The risk profile has continually changed as Vertas Group has grown the service portfolio by acquiring several operating companies which each bring their own unique challenges.*

**Change and business growth has been a consistent factor for Vertas Group, underpinned by robust risk management systems and an impressive health and safety track record.**

Our ROSPA Awards demonstrate the passion and commitment to continual improvement that runs through all aspects of the Group. Vertas Group were awarded the ROSPA Gold Medal Award in 2023, for receiving five consecutive Gold Awards. This prestigious award demonstrates that Vertas Group has consistently high standards and are continually improving, it also demonstrates that we have the best health and safety management performance within the Facilities Management Sector.

**Highlighted below are some of the key achievements from the previous strategy:**

- Maintained ISO systems
- Introduction of the IAM RoadSmart – driver risk profiling and training
- Development and introduction of an e-learning platform (Converse) for mandatory H&S training
- Standardised induction process for new starters



**Every year, we support clients with their HSQE compliance by providing:**

- Approximately 250 Health and Safety Assessments and Fire Risk Assessments
- Around 1000 training courses such as Premises Management, Fire Wardens, and First Aid
- Independent HSQE advice and assurance
- Inspection and maintenance services to ensure their facilities remain safe and healthy.



**21%** DECREASE  
IN INCIDENTS  
**OVER**  
THE LAST  
3 YEARS



WE HAVE  
TRAINED

**32**



**MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AIDERS**

**34,112**  
**TRAINING**  
**MODULES**



COMPLETED THROUGH  
THE E-LEARNING PLATFORM



**2355**  
**FOOD SAFETY**  
AWARENESS COURSES COMPLETED



**MANAGERS**  
**SITE VISITS**  
**COMPLETED.**

**INCREASED BY 42% OVER FY20/21**



**NEAR MISSES &  
HAZARD SPOTS**  
**INCREASED BY +5%  
OVER THE LAST YEAR**



**272** **CEH** STANDARD  
FOOD SAFETY LEVEL 3 COURSES  
COMPLETED BY MANAGERS



**228** **INTERNAL**  
**AUDITS COMPLETED.**  
**UP BY 38% OVER**  
**THE LAST THREE YEARS**



**iam**  
**RoadSmart**



**IAM ROADSMART SYSTEM IN PLACE FOR**

**660** **COLLEAGUES**



# Our Health and Safety Management System

Vertas Group has adopted the management system framework set out in the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) publication 'Successful Health and Safety Management' which is the most widely adopted model of successful health and safety management within the UK. The framework promotes the use of the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) continual improvement model.



This approach achieves a balance between the systems and behavioural / cultural aspects of management which we will continue to develop throughout the new **SAFE** objectives.



## Key Risk Areas (Based on performance data)

Risk	Overview	Mitigation
<b>Slips, Trips and Falls</b>	Slip, trips and falls are the top cause of colleague accidents across Vertas Group.	Maintaining good housekeeping standards and planned preventative maintenance are paramount, supplemented by health and safety training, workplace inspections, spill response, and appropriate safety footwear where required.
<b>Driving for Work</b>	Driving for Work is the most dangerous work activity in Vertas Group that most colleagues will undertake. It is estimated that more than 3 million miles are driven on Vertas Group business each year.	The IAM RoadSmart system provides a driver risk profile for each of our colleagues that drive for work. It tailors training to each colleague's risk profile, and monitors compliance of grey fleet. Fleet vehicles are maintained to the highest standards, and driver competency is monitored by managers and telemetry systems.
<b>Food Safety</b>	Vertas (on average) serves 40,000 meals a day through our education catering and commercial catering services provided across the whole of the UK.	Vertas Group operates a robust food safety management system (HACCP) which is reviewed regularly throughout the year by our Food Safety Working Group and a Primary Authority Partnership Agreement. All catering colleagues are provided with food safety training, and catering facilities are audited regularly by managers and the HSQE team.
<b>Contact with fixed or stationery items</b>	Providing fast paced services sometimes impacts our colleague's awareness of their surroundings, which increases the risk of colliding with fixed structures or stationery work equipment.	Situational awareness is a theme that runs through our mandatory health and safety training. Good housekeeping and workplace design is essential, which is continuously monitored through our assurance activities. Feedback from proactive and reactive monitoring often raises the importance of situational awareness.
<b>Hazardous Substances</b>	Exposure to hazardous substances is a risk to all service areas in Vertas Group, from a range of substances and materials including biological hazards.	All colleagues receive COSHH awareness training, and COSHH assessments are made available at the point of use. The least harmful substances are selected for our services, and where practicable, Stabilised Aqueous Ozone (SAO) is used as a sustainable way to clean. COSHH compliance is checked regularly as part of the assurance programme, and the Environmental Working Group continuously seeks eco-friendly solutions to improve the safety and sustainability of our services.
<b>Manual Handling</b>	All colleagues will carry out some form of manual handling in the workplace i.e., lifting, lowering, pushing, pulling, moving or carrying a load. Manual handling related injuries are a significant cause of lost time within Vertas Group.	Manual Handling awareness training is provided to all colleagues. Significant manual handling operations are risk assessed and mitigations implemented through safe working procedures. Where possible, Manual Handling is eliminated, but as a minimum the risks will be minimised through workplace design, lifting aids, and lightweight and agile work equipment.
<b>Mental Health &amp; Wellbeing</b>	Work-related stress, depression, or anxiety is a growing theme across all organisations. Mental Health is one of the top 3 causes of sickness and absence in Vertas Group.	Vertas Group is committed to supporting our colleagues with any mental health and wellbeing issues. We have a growing number of Mental Health First Aiders across the group, an Employee Assistance Programme and where possible, our colleagues benefit from flexible working arrangements to support a good work-life balance.

# SAFE Objectives

*This strategy introduces the **SAFE** (Simplicity, Accountability, Family, Excellence) Objectives which are driven by our corporate values and provide the strategic direction for continuous improvement and business growth: -*

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**Simplicity** – to continually improve our award-winning Integrated Management System to ensure it remains relevant, simple, easy to use, and fit for purpose.



**Accountability** – communicate roles and responsibilities at all levels, to ensure our colleagues understand they must work safely and sustainably at all times, and ensure client satisfaction.



**Family** – Consistently reduce the risks to our Vertas Family so they can be safe, be sure, be healthy, and return home safely to their loved ones every day.



**Excellence** – Inspire a culture of excellence and continuous improvement throughout the Group.



# Our Mission

“ Our Mission, we will work with our colleagues and partners to provide a SAFE and supportive work environment. The Health, Safety and Wellbeing of our colleagues influences every decision we make. We will drive a culture of safety excellence and continual improvement to develop and inspire an organisation of safety leaders. ”



# Delivering our Aims and Objectives



## Simplicity

1. Remodel the Integrated Management System (IMS) to make it simple, easy to understand and apply
2. Design new, effective, and efficient ways of providing training and information, and managing competence
3. Seek technological solutions to improve the efficiency of the IMS



## Accountability

1. Develop risk-based assurance plans that are owned at all levels and drive a collaborative approach to proactive monitoring across the organisation
2. Review the corporate governance and management review framework to ensure it is effective for the business needs and growth
3. Professional development of our managers to ensure they are confident and competent to effectively manage risks in their service areas



## Family

1. Continual improvement of our risk control systems to provide a **SAFE** and healthy work environment for our colleagues and others under the control of Vertas
2. Regularly engage our colleagues to keep health and safety at the forefront of their minds, seek feedback on improvement opportunities, and build a culture of excellence
3. Ensure visible safety leadership and promote best practice across the Group



## Excellence

1. Actively seek improvement opportunities to drive performance and culture
2. Promote a culture of excellence, where our colleagues always strive to improve safety and the quality of our services, and reduce our impact on the natural environment
3. Measure our risk management maturity and make best practice the norm

# Compliance and Governance

*The Board, led by the Group Chief Executive Officer has overall responsibility for ensuring that the organisation maintains the high standards of health and safety. The implementation of this strategy requires the continued commitment, direction and leadership from all levels across the organisation.*

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We expect our colleagues, suppliers, and clients to play their part in effectively implementing our **SAFE** objectives and sharing our commitment to 'Making the Difference Safely'.

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The **SAFE** objectives within this strategy will be regularly monitored and reviewed at board level to ensure that our commitment, objectives and KPI's are continually met, and that we meet legislative requirements and organisational changes.

Any changes made to our 'Making the Difference Safely' strategy will be formally signed off by Vertas Group CEO.

The responsibility and delivery of this strategy lies with the Associate Director for Health, Safety, Quality Environment Compliance and Governance (HSQE) with the support of the HSQE Team.

The team will coordinate, support, provide a source of competent advice and maintain the effectiveness of the organisation's health, safety and wellbeing integrated management system, enabling all senior leaders, managers and colleagues to competently contribute towards the creation of a safe and healthy learning and working environment.

# Thank you for reading our document.



## Vertas Group Head Office

**Address:** 2 Friars Bridge Road,  
Ipswich, Suffolk, IP1 1RR.

Telephone: **0330 175 8553**

Email: **[mail@vertas.co.uk](mailto:mail@vertas.co.uk)**



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