Case study



The University of Suffolk

Churchill has been responsible for cleaning services at the University of Suffolk since 2008, making it one of the longest-running relationships in our portfolio. Following a competitive tender in 2024, the university renewed its contract with us for a further seven years. The current arrangement covers 10 buildings on the main campus, plus further areas off site, with 45 cleaning operatives delivering the service day to day.

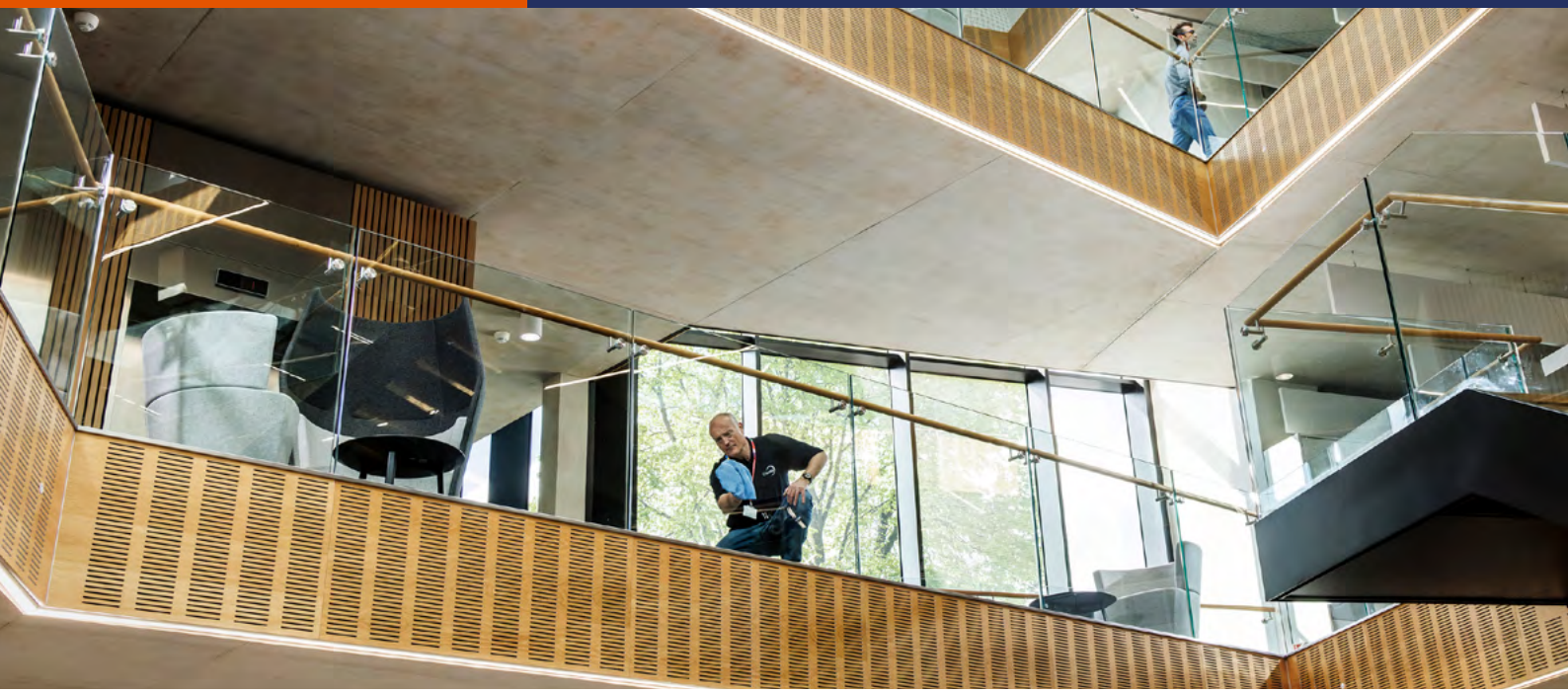
According to Justine Oakes, associate director of estates at the University of Suffolk, the relationship is underpinned by a shared focus on service excellence, social value and sustainability. She has stated that contract teams are treated less like external suppliers and more like an extension of the university's own staff, something that shapes how our cleaning teams approach their work on campus every day.

Churchill

We're employee owned

University of Suffolk

Case study





The everyday job of keeping campus welcoming

Cleaning teams often do their best work quietly, in the background. But in a university setting, they play a real part in first impressions, whether that's a prospective student walking through reception or a lecturer heading into a busy seminar room. At the University of Suffolk, our teams cover teaching spaces, communal areas, cafes, offices, washrooms and student facilities, right across the estate.

Running a campus from early morning through to evening lectures and events takes careful planning. We work closely with the university's contracts manager to build cleaning schedules around the rhythm of campus life, so that heavily used spaces stay presentable without getting in the way of students and staff.

Flexing around the academic calendar

A town centre campus like Suffolk's brings its own pressures. Footfall changes constantly across the year, and demand spikes around exams, open days, graduations and student events. Our cleaning provision has to flex with it. The quieter stretches during holidays, by contrast, give us room to take on bigger jobs, such as carpet cleans, deep cleans and other maintenance work that's harder to schedule during term time.

Being on site for close to two decades has given our teams a genuinely detailed understanding of the estate, the people who use it, and what the university expects of us.

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Keeping standards consistent

Alongside the day-to-day work, a large part of what makes this contract work is how it's managed. David Firth, account manager for Churchill, runs monthly audits across every building, with team leaders on the ground keeping standards consistent across the estate.

That sits within a wider governance structure built into the contract. Monthly meetings with the university's service providers flag anything that needs attention straight away, and quarterly, six-monthly and yearly reviews at director level check how the contract is performing.

A familiar face on campus

Placemaking – making the campus feel like somewhere people want to be – matters to the University of Suffolk. Justine Oakes has described Churchill as the university's eyes and ears on site as we are visible, easy to reach, and familiar faces to students.

Looking ahead

Our partnership with the University of Suffolk is a standout example of what can be achieved when two businesses work side by side towards a common goal. Its success has been underpinned by having a strategy and ethos closely aligned with the university's, which will continue to happen as the contract moves through its next phase.

The University of Suffolk frames its own long-term ambitions in similar terms: building a stronger sense of community and place across campus, in partnership with its cleaning team.

Ultimately, this contract demonstrates what a well-run cleaning service can add to a university beyond the basics of presentation, helping create a campus that feels cared for, whatever the term throws at it.

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