



People strategy

2023-26



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People *strategy*

Following the joining together of **Peabody** and **Catalyst**, we have set out an ambitious and transformational agenda for the new organisation.

Our new Group Strategy recognises the complex and challenging world in which modern housing organisations operate. It reflects the priorities our residents have said matter most to them and our desire to get closer to our customers.

Our three-year People Strategy is designed to attract and retain the best talent to deliver the Group Strategy. Our vision is to be a workplace where everyone can bring their whole selves to work, and most importantly, one which reflects the communities we serve.

Introduction

Purpose, strategic priorities and values

Our new purpose, strategic priorities and values put customers at the front and centre of everything we do and provides the foundation for the culture of the new organisation. Our new People Strategy will be pivotal in enabling delivery of a cohesive and customer-focused culture.

‘We are all about people’

At the heart of the People Strategy is our colleague offer. This sets out the essence of what it is like to work at Peabody to current and future colleagues; our salaries are competitive and are positioned in the second quartile of the market (at least median and generally below the top quartile). We also have a fantastic range of benefits, from volunteering days, bonuses, and a flexible benefits programme to life assurance and a range of other wellbeing offers to make sure our colleagues are supported. Our colleague offer will also reflect our compelling social purpose and draw from our organisational mission and core values.

The traditional employee journey or lifecycle moves through the following stages – Attraction, Onboarding, Wellbeing, Development, Performance, Retention and Separation.

In this strategy, we’re taking a more modern approach, at the same time ensuring our values, commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and colleague/customer experience are embedded into each stage.

We’ll do this by creating a ‘Peabody Progress Plan’, which will outline how colleagues will be supported during each stage of their journey with us, to help our people flourish.

Local model and customer satisfaction

Our local approach will ensure that we deliver the things that customers tell us matter the most to them. At Peabody we have four regions, each run by a Managing Director who has overall accountability and will lead and coordinate local services. In addition, a fifth south counties region is run by Town and Country Housing. Our customer-facing colleagues will be empowered to make decisions in their areas.

In addition, we are aligning our whole organisation around supporting the local Peabody model and putting our customers at the centre of every decision we make.

The new People Strategy is designed to provide choice. We recognise that ‘one size doesn’t fit all’, so when we think about designing new ways of working, delivering the strategic priorities and enabling delivery of local plans, we will partner with each region and area of the business to understand local priorities and find out what skills and capabilities are required. Together, we’ll create local plans designed around our strategic priorities and new ways of working.

New ways of working

The pandemic has accelerated the trend to more flexible and hybrid ways of working, particularly for colleagues who were previously office-based. Colleagues, and potential new colleagues, are increasingly looking for flexible or hybrid working options which will provide a wider and more diverse talent pool including, for example, those with caring responsibilities.

We’ll establish the most effective and productive ways of working in each business area, which will reflect the needs of our customers (both external and internal), the strategy for how services will be delivered more efficiently, and the leadership and management approach. We will keep our approach under continuous review as ways of working evolve and change, but we will work with business areas to ensure that we have the right balance of home and office working to support the needs of our customers.

Where colleagues are place based or customer facing, we’ll support flexible working where practical. Again, we’ll make sure that the needs of our customers come first and foremost.

The colleague *journey*

Attraction

Attracting and retaining diverse and talented people is key to our success and, as part of this, our colleague offer will clearly state the benefits of working for Peabody in return for the skills and experience colleagues bring us.

As well as the tangible benefits such as pay, holiday and flexible working, this will also highlight the social and cultural benefits that make us different and a rewarding place to work.

Together with our colleagues in communications, we'll develop an employer brand campaign, which showcases our colleague offer, sharing case studies and videos of what it's like to work and develop a career at Peabody. This will run across all our social media channels to support recruitment and retention, as well as communicating how our teams are proud to work for Peabody. The delivery of learning through the Academy will be a big part of this, to attract new and diverse talent into the organisation.

The first view a candidate will have of our culture and the way we operate as an organisation is the application and interview process, which is why it is essential that we have a seamless process that works for both the candidate and the hiring managers.

We will move back to predominantly face to face interviewing but retain the flexibility for virtual interviews to ensure we reach a wider range of diverse candidates. Our EDI Strategy and the People Strategy will act as joint enablers in attracting more diverse candidates into the organisation. We will ensure we have diverse shortlists, interview panels and for more senior roles, commit to following the Rooney Rule. And we will work with recruiting managers to support the appointment of more diverse candidates where we can.



The colleague journey

Onboarding

We want all new starters to feel that they belong from the moment we offer them the role. We'll think about the way we want new colleagues to feel rather than just about what we want them to know. We'll begin onboarding them before they join us. And once they have joined, we'll encourage them to own their development from the start, by letting them settle in, in a time and a way that suits them.

We'll offer a virtual day one welcome followed by a more local face-to-face get together by the end of month one.

The onboarding programme will be based on three elements:

Culture: An introduction to our values, behaviours, and customer experience

Connections: An opportunity to network, make connections with key groups and individuals across the organisation

Career: Introduction to the Academy and an overview of learning and self-development opportunities

We have already introduced settling in periods across both organisations (this replaces the traditional probation) and we will extend this further to Care and Support and other customer facing colleagues.

As part of their induction, new colleagues will develop a personal progress plan when they start, outlining how they will be supported during their journey with us. This will provide them with important information and what to expect from life at Peabody. They will work with their line manager to develop a 3-month, 6-month, and then yearly plan to ensure they are up to date with mandatory learning, to map out role related objectives, and to factor in future development in the form of a personal learning plan.

We want our colleagues to take ownership of their career progression, creating a culture in which talented people are recognised and promoted internally.

Wellbeing

We already have a strong offer in terms of colleague support; Employee Assistance Programme, Network Groups, Colleague Forum, Health and Wellbeing initiatives and regular engagement surveys.

Our Health and Wellbeing offer will be reviewed, and we will use a more evidenced based approach, from people data analysed through engagement surveys, sickness absence and employee relations cases, to provide a more tailored approach across different parts of the business.

Following integration, change and restructuring will not stop, and we'll ensure that our colleagues are supported with mental health and resilience initiatives. Mindful also of the cost-of-living challenges, which are likely to remain for some time, we'll promote the comprehensive range of financial guidance, benefits and cost-saving opportunities available as part of our colleague offer.

We will carry out pulse surveys to understand specific feedback and thoughts from our colleagues during the year, which will be short and targeted to a particular subject; we will also move to a 'sample' based approach rather than pulsing the whole organisation every time. Every two years, we will carry out a larger more detail engagement survey across the group.

We'll support colleagues who have caring rights by delivering seminars and workshop events alongside our family network. We have joined 'Employers for Carers' so that we can collaborate with them to provide information and advice for working carers to help them juggle work and care effectively.

To support not only those who have caring responsibilities, but to create a good work life balance and enable flexibility for women returning to the workplace. So, we will review our family friendly policies and our approach to hybrid working.

Guidance will be provided for managers, so that they can have discussions with colleagues about their health and wellbeing, recognising the importance of having a clear sense of purpose and ownership over work that is meaningful.

We'll continue to focus on supporting women through the menopause. We'll create a culture where women feel comfortable about discussing their symptoms and what impact it may have on their working lives. We'll do this through webinars, provision of information, menopause coffee chats and access to formal or informal support.

Men's health will also be a key priority for us, with a focus on mental health. We'll provide a transparent and supportive offering, encouraging men to talk, giving them the confidence that they aren't judged and there is no stigma. We will train line managers to recognise the ways in which symptoms of reduced mental health can differ between men and women.

Development

The creation of the new Peabody Academy will bring a wide range of new opportunities for our colleagues. We will focus initially on customer experience and values/culture, delivering skills-based learning across the organisation.

As we progress with the development of the Academy, we'll see courses and learning grow, maximising the use of our Apprenticeship Levy.

The ambitions of the Academy over the life of this strategy include:

- Attracting, developing and retaining the skills we need to deliver our priorities
- Creating a long-term talent pool
- Developing skills for emerging pressures within the fast-moving landscape of the sector, specifically building safety, environmental sustainability, care and support, complaints, repairs and maintenance and professional competencies which are required under new changes brought in under amendments to the Social Housing Regulation Bill.
- Creating social impact through learning with customers & colleagues learning side by side.
- Developing great customer service
- Creating a more resilient organisation for the future
- Offering a great place to work as part of Peabody's colleague offer

Our EDI programmes and leadership and management development activity will be delivered through the Academy. Leadership and management development will be a key focus for us as we move into our new ways of working.



The colleague journey

We want to embed the concept of inclusive leadership to ensure our teams are productive, happy and engaged. And as we continue to work in a different world, where many colleagues will be working from home or other locations, we'll ensure that teams and their managers have the best tools and resources to make the best of working and managing remotely and build skills for the future.

The identification and development of high potential and future talent is an important attraction and retention tool. To ensure our organisation remains agile, we will introduce a talent planning programme that delivers continuity of talent and embraces cross-functional collaboration through structured development activity and coaching and mentoring.

Performance

Both organisations have moved to a more informal process for performance management, based on continuous conversations. We'll develop this model further to ensure that we can measure productivity and outcomes, particularly for those who are hybrid working, and link values, behaviours, outcomes and KPIs to bonuses.

Our people policies will be integrated to create a new set of group policies, that will be inclusive, which will allow colleagues to be trusted to use their judgement and will provide an effortless experience; they will be designed in a way which will simplify processes which affect the minority and frustrate the majority.

Our plans to introduce a resolution framework will be progressed as part of this strategy. We will move away from formal performance management processes that may include use of our current disciplinary, grievance or capability policies, and introduce a resolution framework, whilst retaining the option of using a formal approach, where required.

This will enable managers and colleagues, in most cases, to resolve issues earlier and with a more constructive and human and kind approach that saves both time and legal fees. Full training will be given to line managers and leaders on how to implement the new approach.

Retention

Our reward offer has followed a traditional approach with the standard, salary, bonus, pension, together with an element of flexible benefits.

As we continue to work in a more flexible and hybrid way, and with a cost-of-living crisis upon us, we need to focus on a greater choice around benefits, reward and flexible working.

We'll research and discuss new ideas with colleagues, including reviewing our approach to bonuses and reward schemes which allows recognition 'in the moment' and at year end. This will form part of our wider Reward Strategy.

We'll look at reward as a whole, giving colleagues a Reward Passport, which will enable them to use their reward to connect to other offers such as paying for learning and wellbeing opportunities.

This new approach will offer an agile and flexible rewards strategy which will encourage options beyond just benefits and pay. For example, a colleague may want to use a spot bonus payment to pay for some coaching or external learning.

Our values will play a key part in our recognition and reward schemes, and this will provide the opportunity for us to create local schemes, as well as a group scheme, which are more suitable to the roles carried out in different parts of the business. (e.g., sales and marketing and care and support).

A longer-term piece of work will include reviewing our pay framework, which establishes the value of our roles through job evaluation, to establish if this is still fit for purpose.

Separation

If colleagues do decide to move on, we need to be clear about why. We'll ensure that we carry out as many exit interviews as possible and use data, reporting and feedback to enhance understanding and learning and make changes, or review ways of working where we can.

We love new ideas, so we will use this information to help improve the experience for our current and future Peabody people.

We want colleagues leaving the organisation to have as good an experience as those starting, so that they will tell others what a great place to work Peabody is.

Culture, diversity *and delivery*

Culture

A new set of values was created as part of the merger in April 2022, informed by views from across both organisations. These will underpin our culture and will be the foundations for the success of the new organisation.

Our values will complement our customer first culture and will be the foundations for the success of the transformation of the new organisation.

Throughout the culture transformation programme, we put a particular emphasis on engaging a wide, representative and diverse range of colleagues across all teams.

A key part of the programme will be to co-create a set of behaviours and design frameworks. These will support our strategic priorities and bring our values to life in everything we do for colleagues and customers.

This will be a collective exercise, involving colleagues at every level, so that our people feel connected with our purpose and understand how their role supports the delivery of improved services for customers through the way they make decisions and behave every day. Working together with leaders and teams across the business, we'll ensure our values

are embedded across all areas of the new organisation including behaviour, leadership development, learning, organisational design, recruitment, performance, reward and recognition, talent planning, policies, service delivery, communication, engagement and ways of working.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

It is essential that every colleague is valued, respected and given equal access to opportunity. We want our colleagues to reflect the communities we serve and to hear and see the lived experience of our residents.

We'll embed EDI into our whole colleague journey and make inclusion relevant to everyone.

A complementary EDI Strategy has been developed for the group to bring momentum to our existing work and to identify new opportunities to push this vital agenda forward.

We'll work with the Head of EDI to deliver EDI activity through local people plans in our Strategic Partnering Team, including a real focus on improving our diversity data across the group, so we have a clearer and more accurate picture of the make-up of our colleagues. This will allow us to take targeted action in the right way.



Culture, diversity and delivery

Our EDI networks play a key part in supporting the diversity agenda. They represent the views of their members and create a sense of community for people to come together. We want to further develop and promote the networks (race equality, gender, family, ability and LGBTQ+) so that they can grow and provide opportunity for all colleagues to be heard.

Delivering the strategy and measuring success

This strategy will be delivered through our People Strategy Delivery Programme, against which progress will be measured on an ongoing basis. The programme is not intended to be a static plan; it should and will have the ability to adapt in response to changing organisational need and emerging related priorities.

We'll measure successful delivery of our People Strategy using existing data. But this will need to be expanded to include new outcome-based measures identified as we develop our People Strategy Delivery Programme. (e.g., the impact of people development activity as opposed to the number of people attending training courses).

Ultimately, the success of our People Strategy will be measured by the success of the business, including our local Peabody model and the delivery of the group strategic priorities.

Key success indicators will include:

- Improved engagement and net promoter scores year on year
- Improved retention rates and reduced turnover
- Reduction in formal employee relations issues
- Reduced sickness absence rates (particularly mental health)
- Increase in diversity across leadership levels, in particular gender, disability and black, asian and minority ethnic representation
- Successful and timely recruitment campaigns
- Increased development opportunities leading to internal progression
- Survey results that tell us we have a positive and inclusive culture

The performance of individual leaders and managers will also be a key to the success of the implementation of the People Strategy. While the People and Culture Team will own the programme, every leader across the group is responsible for delivery of local people plans and for creating an inclusive and customer centric culture.



Year one people strategy delivery programme

Activity

Develop and launch the Peabody Academy as an employer provider; create a new Academy team and start delivering our first apprenticeship by end of June 2023.

Develop a new Health and Wellbeing plan for the year, focusing on worklife balance, mental health (including stress and resilience), financial wellbeing and the menopause; create local plans to support individual teams. Promote and communicate our new EAP offer to colleagues to support working through transition and integration.

Deliver an engagement survey for the new group (post ToE and integration).

Develop local people plans through our Strategic Partnering team, to focus on the key activity within the People Strategy that is critical to each region and business area.

Review the group bonus schemes and engage colleagues to develop a refreshed approach which is part of a wider reward strategy.

Create common data sets, through a people dashboard for each business area, to support the local people plans and to inform decision making by directors and managing directors.

Develop a Talent Planning Programme for leaders (initial pilot) across the organisation.

Review our approach to flexible and hybrid working and develop a refreshed policy.



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