



OPEN CONVERSATIONS ANNUAL REPORT

November 2022





WELCOME TO OUR FIRST OPEN CONVERSATIONS ANNUAL REPORT.

Our society is enriched by its diversity, and the same can be said of The PHA Group. Our Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (ED&I) committee is dedicated to building and celebrating a community that reflects the society we live in. They are responsible for ensuring that our business is truly diverse and inclusive in both policy and practice. The publication of this report is a true testament to the hard work and dedication they put into our annual strategy.

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION COMMITTEE



Hayley Bromfield
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Talent, People & Culture Manager



Helen Salvin
Senior Account Director



Kajal Shah
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Declan Leavy
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Sophie Bassil
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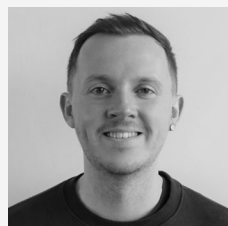
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OUR MISSION

It starts with taking a long hard look at yourself.

Our society is diverse – from gender, race, culture, age, and sexual orientation, through to our unique qualities, values, skills, experiences, and ambitions.

At PHA, we are committed to fostering diversity and inclusion at all levels to enable everyone to reach their full potential whilst feeling valued, included, and respected. We are proud of what we have achieved, but like many businesses, we needed to step back and take a long hard look at ourselves to reflect on what we were doing well, and what we could improve on.

As we work towards making our own agency better and removing the barriers that exist, we are also committed to making contributions to the broader public relations industry, supporting a long-term change that creates a more diverse and inclusive sector.

We know this won't happen overnight, there are no quick fixes and quite frankly, we don't want those. We want to encourage long-term change for the better.

Nurturing an inclusive working environment, where we are all aware of our own, individual views and their limitations and encourage each other to take a positive approach to diversity by promoting a culture of openness and honesty is critical.

Through a programme of activity with clear objectives that ensure we always strive for better, we will continue to educate and promote balanced discussion of differences, increased understanding of cultural practices, histories, and beliefs from a broad spectrum of diverse groups. We will celebrate and encourage different ideas, perspectives and backgrounds and will never tolerate any form of discrimination.

Our staff, clients and partners will all play a part; we will choose to work with individuals and businesses who share our ethos and beliefs.

With our staff taking a central role in developing an approach that ensures actual change, not just discussion, we want to be, and will be held accountable for the vital role we have to play in making not just our own agency, but the wider PR industry a more diverse and inclusive sector.

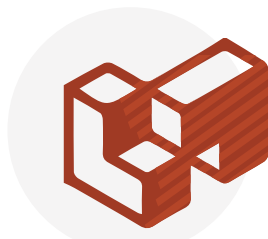
OUR OBJECTIVES

Since launching our ED&I strategy in September 2021, we have committed ourselves to:



GROW

Grow and foster an environment that actively seeks out, encourages and embraces different ideas, perspectives and backgrounds which is both representative and inclusive of the communities we live and work within.



ENGAGE

Engage mindfully in open and frequent dialogues to ensure that each employee and client feels valued, included, and respected.



PROTECT

Never tolerate any form of unacceptable behaviour, harassment, discrimination, bullying (including cyber bullying) or victimisation in any area of employment or in the provision of our services to our clients because of differences, such as age, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, religion, or sexual orientation.



FOCUS

Focus on building a diverse workforce by attracting, developing, and retaining employees in all areas and at all levels.



PROMOTE

Promote equal opportunities by striving to identify and eliminate obstacles and systemic barriers so that everyone can reach their full potential.

These objectives will always be our objectives, we are committed to them for the long term and aren't looking for quick fixes. We know how important it is to create change that lasts and to be accountable, that's why we are choosing to launch our own annual report that looks specifically at ED&I at PHA. We want to give our employees, the industry and everyone else the chance to review our activity, be inspired and to show that we are proud of what we have achieved, whilst recognising there will always be more to do.

A LETTER FROM OUR MDS

In April 2020 we were appointed Joint Managing Directors of The PHA Group, an agency we have both been proud to work at for over 16 years. During that time, we have seen it grow and develop in many different ways and today we work with a group of talented individuals who every day make coming to work a joy.

We both have a shared passion for ED&I and when we took over the day to day running of the business, it was high on our list of priorities. We wanted to and had to do more, to make our agency better and to play a role in improving the industry too. It has been a real privilege to prioritise ED&I at PHA and work with our dedicated ED&I team, as well as external experts, to ensure we regularly assess our unique challenges and commit to continual change and improvement.

We are on a journey and that started by admitting we are not perfect.

We have consciously exposed ourselves to feedback, good and bad, from you and from outside experts, and comparison with our industry peers as well as society in general. The objective was simple: to improve our diversity and support for minority groups,

and to develop a truly open, inclusive culture for employees present and future.

Over the last 12 months, we have developed practical steps to ensure we continue to work towards that central goal.

Our ED&I team have helped create a broad and informative training schedule, with industry-leading expert speakers, and safe, supportive forums for us to share our own feedback and personal perspectives. Our recruitment strategy has been refined to encourage more diverse applications and our investment in the next generation of talent has led to us employing some truly outstanding individuals.

Continual education is vital for us all, and we have shared that message with client partners, who now sign up to the same cultural approach of respect and inclusion through our client charter which is attached to every client contract.

We know that sometimes these topics are difficult to raise and articulate, but we are committed to providing the right opportunities for all to do so, and with your support our 'open conversations' will continue to break down barriers and educate,

When working on this report with our ED&I team what came through loud and clear was the passion that runs through the business for ED&I. From the first-person accounts that have been shared, not just in this report but through our forums, to the high attendance at training and the many vocal advocates, we are proud to have a workforce that is as committed as we are to achieving change.

We would like to extend a huge thank you to our ED&I team who have worked tirelessly to deliver our strategy, we could not do this without you. Their ideas, passion and commitment are truly impressive.

And an additional thank you to all of you, our staff, who have embraced our strategy and engaged, contributed, and supported this very important initiative.

As always, we welcome all feedback and hope that you all feel the same sense of pride that we do when you read this report.

Shelley & Stuart

Shelley & Stuart
Joint Group Managing Directors



RECRUITMENT & TALENT

The PHA Group is committed to building a diverse workforce across all levels by attracting, developing, and retaining employees of different ages, sexes, sexualities, gender identities, races/ethnicities, religions/beliefs, social classes, educational backgrounds, and (dis)abilities.

We have reviewed and revised our talent strategy and recruitment processes with the goal of increasing the interest levels and number of applications from candidates belonging to these different social identity groups, and are committed to continually reviewing and improving our approach to this.



Attracting talent

To date, we have focused on encouraging applications from candidates who may not have otherwise been aware of us as an employer, or communications as an industry, eliminating interference from unconscious bias within our hiring process, as well as developing talent at grassroots level and beyond. To achieve this, we have taken several steps which have led to some positive results.

To reach and attract candidates from a variety of backgrounds, we post adverts on a wide array of job boards, including those frequented by underrepresented groups, regularly review our job descriptions to ensure they do not include gendered and non-inclusive wording, and assess candidates on their transferable skills instead of solely considering like-for-like profiles.

To reduce the risk of unconscious bias, we use a tool that hides candidates' names and photos on LinkedIn, remove all personal details from CVs before sending to hiring managers, arrange screening calls and interviews around personal commitments, offer reasonable adjustments, and provide as diverse interview panels as possible.

To inspire and hire entry-level talent, we have refined our internship scheme by providing three-month placements paying the London Living Wage, offer 50% of our interns permanent positions, and partnered with The Taylor Bennett Foundation, which supports our recruiting efforts for junior roles.

7 Recruitment & Talent

The PHA Group
workforce age range:

18-29: **56%**

30-39: **36%**

40-49: **6%**

50-59: **2%**

60+: **0%**

TAYLOR BENNETT FOUNDATION

The Taylor Bennett Foundation

The Taylor Bennett Foundation is a charity that educates and encourages the next generation of talent from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds to pursue a career in communications, while maintaining a network of alumni who are equally committed to the growth of diverse talent in the industry.

Our partnership has involved hosting masterclasses for interns and trainees who are keen to learn more about the roles of our employees and their specialist sectors, combining interactive presentations, skills-based activities, and Q&A sessions to provide detailed insight into the industry.

Meanwhile, the mentorship scheme pairs aspiring talent with our employees who share career advice, educate on how to upskill, and progress, and support with professional challenges. We also facilitate bootcamp training and internships via the Summer Stars programme which welcomes school leavers, students, and graduates for three-month placements with the view of joining us in permanent roles upon completion. Additionally, we advertise job vacancies to the wider network via social media and email marketing, as well as using the expert advice offered by the charity to benefit our recruitment strategy and goals.

Our partnership with the Taylor Bennett Foundation has been a mutual success in its first year, and feedback received following the masterclasses hosted by PHA highlights the strong start of this continued relationship.

“I found it extremely useful as they gave an in-depth explanation of the steps that can be used to create a PR strategy, tips on why a brand might want to do a PR campaign, and tactics that can be used to earn media coverage”

We are also delighted that our first Summer Stars interns settled well into agency life, one of whom has joined us on a permanent basis, and kindly shared a detailed insight into their experience.

Sarah Lietzow, Junior Account Executive

I joined The PHA Group as a Consumer and Lifestyle intern through the Taylor Bennett Foundation, a charity that exists to encourage people from a Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds to pursue a career in Communications. After recently graduating from a PR and Communications degree, I was intrigued to start my internship with a PR agency that has a relentless commitment to creative campaigns which connect people and purpose. If there is one thing that struck me very early at The PHA Group, it's the friendly working culture. No one was too busy to say hello and introduce themselves, and people took time out of their busy schedules to chat and get to know me.

From my first day, I was treated as a permanent member of the team and given the opportunity to work on various accounts. I was involved in new business brainstorming sessions, planning PR campaigns, and writing pitches for magazines such as ELLE, GQ, and Harper's Bazaar. Besides work, PHA knows how to have fun by organising after-work drinks and sports events for employees.

From the workshops to the team collaboration, my time at PHA has been enjoyable and enriching. I have learnt a lot in a small period, and every day has been a new experience. I want to extend my thanks to everyone at PHA for their support, and for helping me make the most of this opportunity. If you are looking for a PR agency that helps you to develop yourself professionally and cares about your wellbeing, PHA is the place to be.

Employee demographics

As a result of the Taylor Bennett Foundation partnership, combined with our wider recruitment and talent strategy, we are pleased to have seen a

64%

increase in the proportion of employees who identify as ethnically diverse in the last 12 months.

Commitment to the future

We acknowledge that building and maintaining a diverse and inclusive workforce starts with recruitment, and we are proud of the initial changes made to our talent strategy, as well as the results we have already seen. We welcome feedback on our current processes and practices so that we can continually improve them in line with the evolving world of work.

Whilst we are proud to be moving in the right direction, we acknowledge that there is plenty of room for development and are therefore committed to several actions to continually push our strategy forward.

We will be focusing our resourcing efforts by reaching out to relevant charities,

associations, and networks that can connect us with candidates who provide expert knowledge and insight into reaching a wider talent pool with the best ED&I practices in mind.

Similarly, we recognise that 68% of our employees are university-educated, and 26% received a private school education, higher than the UK demographic. To address this, we will endeavour to create long-lasting relationships with schools and colleges to entice candidates who have received secondary education in the state sector, and will work closely with our Sales & Marketing department to create talent attraction materials relevant to this group.

ACCESSIBILITY AT WORK

Accessibility at work is a crucial part of our ED&I strategy. A person with a disability is defined in the Equality Act 2010 as someone with "A physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities." A wide range of physical, mental, conditions and experiences are covered under this definition.

We wanted to break down that definition and support the view that society creates physical, organisational, and attitudinal barriers, by failing to consider the requirements and aspirations of that person. We are also aware that the term 'disability' could include a range of medical conditions, specific learning difficulties, neurodivergence, and mental health needs; we are sensitive towards these individual circumstances and 3.77% of our employees state they have a disability, either physical or hidden.

We have worked with our employees to break down stigmas and broaden their understanding of disability.



Are you IN? Crohn's & Colitis

This year we signed up to Crohn's & Colitis UK's Are you IN? campaign, committing to several pledges centred around educating staff about invisible conditions, empowering people to have conversations, and adopting policies that better support working with an invisible disability and condition.

Pledges include appointing an Invisible Condition representative, offering staff additional flexible and remote working options, and raising awareness of invisible disabilities and conditions through training.

To officially launch the campaign, we invited colleagues to attend an 'Open Conversations' Forum, where two employees who are both living with Crohn's came together to

share their personal experiences and raise awareness of what it's like to live with an invisible condition.

Employees were able to ask questions and encouraged to take part in In My Shoes – an interactive application which allows people to immerse themselves in the challenges that people with Crohn's and Colitis face every day.

**CROHN'S &
COLITIS UK**



Charly Gibbs, Senior Digital & Motion Designer living with Crohn's, says:

"Before my diagnosis I'd never heard of Crohn's and Colitis, or how they could affect people. Whilst struggling to come to terms with my own illness, I learned so much through research and my own personal experiences, and realised how important it is to educate people on how these illness' can impact daily life.

Having never spoken about my condition or shared personal experiences so openly before, hosting the 'Are you in?' open conversation with Sophie was incredibly daunting but equally important. For me, divulging how Crohn's has affected my personal relationships, education and health was as important as explaining the physical effects.

By taking part, I not only learned more about the conditions, but found a huge sense of relief and a support network I wasn't previously aware of. Both Sophie and I received an overwhelming amount of feedback and supportive messages, as a result I've found it's not only helped me feel more confident discussing my condition, but opened a space where people are more comfortable talking about how their invisible condition affects them."



Reasonable adjustments

In the "Life in Lockdown" survey, Crohn's & Colitis UK found that more than half of people living with Crohn's and Colitis benefitted from more time to rest and manage their conditions, while working from home during the pandemic. Our Hybrid Working Charter – which asks colleagues to attend the office for a minimum of four days a month – supports people with conditions who may feel more comfortable working from home.

Further to this, we also have a Disability and Access Policy, showing our commitment to removing barriers, ensuring those with a disability are offered the same opportunities as those without. We also commit to offering necessary adjustments to ensure that employees can undertake all the responsibilities of their role. This may include additional equipment, tools, or changes in their working pattern or environment.



Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Scheme

We are proud that this year we became a Sunflower Friendly Organisation.

The Hidden Disabilities Sunflower scheme helps individuals indicate that they have a disability by wearing the sunflower logo. The sunflower image highlights that a person may need additional help, support, and understanding when navigating the world around them. The aim of the sunflower scheme is to make the invisible visible.

We are committed to supporting all employees, and visitors to our offices, who have disabilities both hidden and visible. Our PHA offices appear in the map of Sunflower-friendly places, and we're listed as an organisation that supports those around us.

The Sunflower scheme also provides access to a wide variety of online training, so our employees have the chance to educate themselves and take advice.

12 Accessibility at work

Sophie Bassil, Senior Account Manager - Invisible Conditions Representative

Invisible conditions are complicated. I know that myself, having lived with Crohn's for over 10 years.

Each condition affects people in very different ways. But often people living with an invisible condition or disability have something in common – a shared experience of discrimination and stigma.

I've faced this myself in various situations: I've used the accessible toilets at a festival where I was verbally abused by the security guard; I've been broken up with for having Crohn's and I'm still not immune from feeling guilty when I must cancel plans.

In fact, the times when I've been struggling the most (mentally and physically), I've often looked well – and no one would know.

So, I try and channel these experiences into something positive and hope that by talking about my experiences, more people will understand. The more people who understand, the better we can make it for others.

As work is somewhere we spend a lot of our time (either in the office or virtually), this is one place where we can positively change things for people with long-term conditions and disabilities, particularly as an estimated 14.1 million people in the UK live with one. You will have friends and family who do.

However, although positive change can be ignited by individuals or good managers, this needs to be backed up by company-wide

recognition and support. It shouldn't be down to luck.

When I joined PHA, a lot had been achieved by the Diversity & Inclusion Committee, but invisible disabilities were a space that we hadn't yet entered.

I had come from Crohn's & Colitis UK and had been involved in their Are you IN? campaign, which is all about making workplaces more inclusive for people with invisible conditions and disabilities. So, I knew I wanted to get PHA involved. If people with invisible conditions feel support, acknowledged, and understood, this can improve productivity and drive better employee wellbeing and satisfaction.

The receptiveness to me bringing this to the table and the value that has been placed on this topic by PHA has been so welcome.

We have just started our work in this space and whilst I feel proud of what we have achieved so far, we certainly have ambitions to ensure we are considering accessibility and disability in a broader way moving forward.



Commitment to the future

Over the next year we will be investing in training that broadens our understanding of disability. Not only does this involve greater awareness and education around other areas, such as neurodiverse conditions, but physical disabilities too. This will involve providing insight for employees so they recognise a condition/support they might require themselves, or for their colleagues, as well as learning more about the social model of disability and the language we use. We are also exploring training around access – so that employees feel more confident producing documents and hosting meetings that are accessible.

We are also auditing our physical building access across each of our four offices so we can adjust for working and meetings and communicate the facilities we have available to employees, clients, and partners. All of our offices are wheelchair accessible; our London office has some restrictions due to it being listed, which means it cannot accommodate all types of wheelchairs. For any employees or visitors who may be affected, we will work to find appropriate alternatives to support their needs.

RACE, RELIGION & BELIEF

In the past year, it has become clear that the conversation around diversity, inclusion, equality, and belonging has fundamentally changed. In the PR industry – a world where communication is in our DNA – it is essential that there is no gap in values and delivery between 'say' and 'do' when it comes to equality in the workplace. We are not here to pay lip service to ED&I but to set goals for long lasting change and ensure improvements are made.

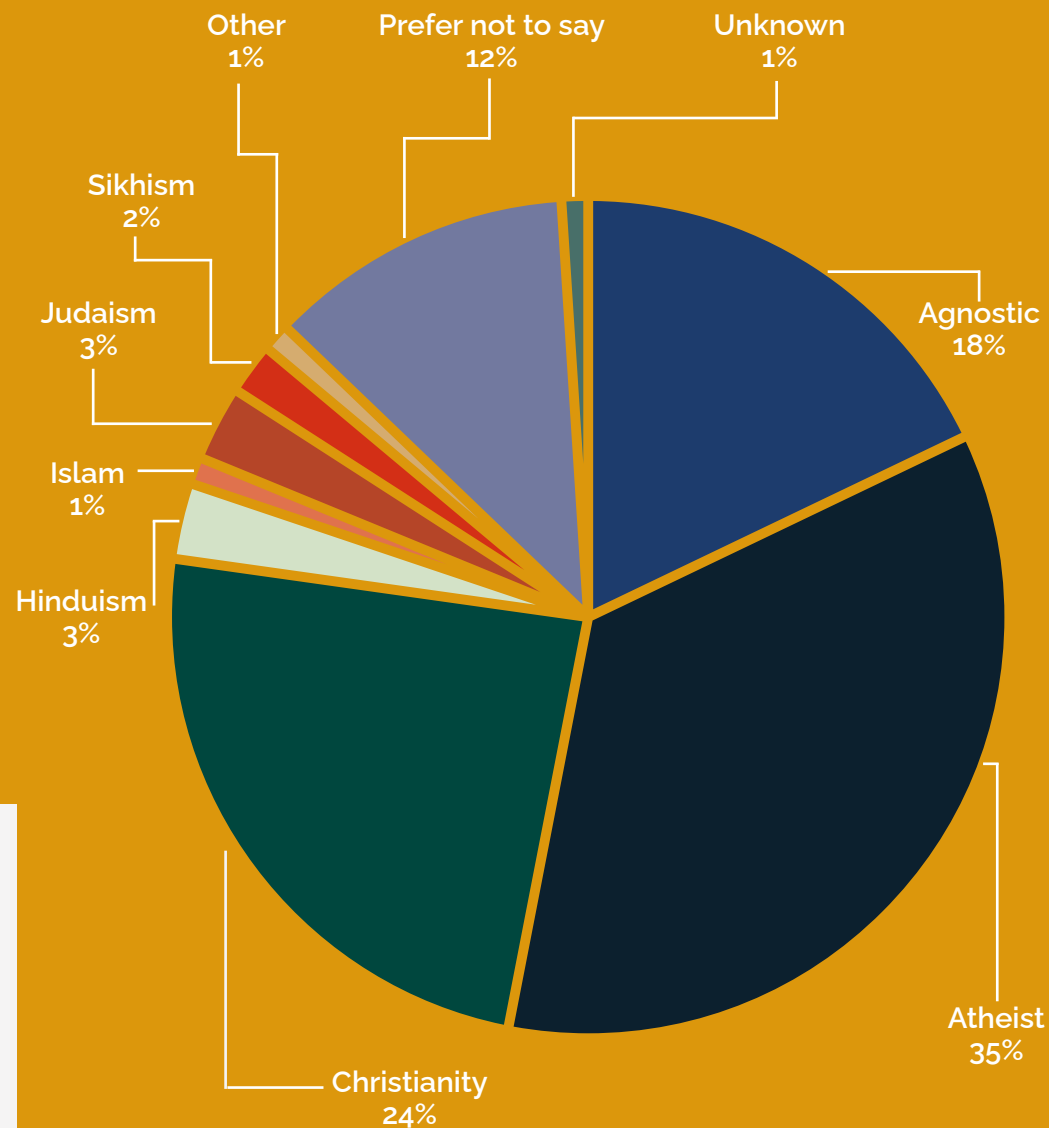
We aim to ensure all our employees feel supported and encouraged to be open and honest about their heritage, culture and way of life, making our workforce a diverse and inclusive place to work and empowering people to be themselves.

We took an honest look at our workforce and wanted to address how we could become more diverse as a community and wider industry, and therefore dedicated our time as a committee to putting robust processes in place. We recognise that structural changes form only part of the answer, which is why we are committed to making equally important changes to our culture. This includes challenging micro-behaviours and exclusionary language, engaging with agnostic colleagues without vilifying them and creating a supportive culture that supports intersectional identities and empowers people to be themselves.

DEFINITION:

Race refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship), as well as ethnic or national origins. Religion generally refers to the wider range of recognised practiced faiths. Beliefs refers to religious and philosophical beliefs, including lack of belief (such as Atheism).

OUR COMMUNITY:





Working with Vanessa Belleau

As part of our ED&I training offering, we've worked with diversity, inclusion and belonging coach, Vanessa Belleau. As well as bringing a wealth of experience in the ED&I sphere, Vanessa has a unique energy that you can't help but pay attention to, and she creates a safe space in which people can learn and discuss their thoughts and experiences. Staff feedback on these sessions has been incredibly positive, which is why, as a team, we plan to continue working with Vanessa to deliver more training over the next year.

Since December 2021, we've hosted four sessions with Vanessa: Let's Talk About the Basics of D&I, Let's Talk About Conscious Inclusion, Let's Talk About Having Better Conversations, and an 'empathy haven' Q&A session.

Let's talk about the basics of ED&I

This energetic virtual session covered various areas to get staff thinking and talking about the importance of diversity and inclusion:

- **The concept of diversity, inclusion, equity and belonging as a whole.**
- **The difference between oppression and inclusion, including the impact of discrimination in the workplace.**
- **The importance of inclusion and belonging within an organisation.**
- **Other areas of ED&I, including intersectionality, identity, and racism.**

Let's talk about conscious inclusion

This session centred around discovering how we can be better allies and gave staff a clearer understanding of how we can all use our privilege. The session focused on four key areas:

- **The concept of unconscious bias explained.**
- **The difference between prejudice, oppression and discrimination.**
- **How to overcome unconscious bias.**
- **How to use privilege for the greater good.**

Let's talk about having better conversations

In this session, Vanessa talked through some of the fundamentals involved in having better conversations around racism, privilege, and bias. Ahead of the session, we came up with various scenarios to get staff talking and encourage them to speak openly, share their experience, and indeed learn how to have better conversations.

Empathy haven Q&A

As part of the PHA Talkathon, Vanessa and the ED&I team offered a safe, virtual space where we reflected on the concept of unconscious bias a bit more – particularly around how it shows up at PHA and in the workplace. This also gave us an opportunity to reflect on our ED&I efforts and encourage employees to ask Vanessa anything.



Open Conversations: Hannukah & Chinese New Year

In addition to the training programme, we have also held employee-led sessions as part of our Open Conversations forum series. Over the last 12 months, sessions have included expert-led experiences from the Social Media Manager for Aish UK, as well as an employee experience of Chinese New Year celebrations across the globe, and the meaning and celebrations behind Easter and Passover.

Our Open Conversations forums allow employees to learn in a safe, supported, and open space where questions and discussions are encouraged.

Aside from the feedback we receive after each session, we often ask members of staff to review their experience in more depth. Angel is an Account Manager on our social media team, and shared her thoughts after attending all our ED&I training sessions with Vanessa Belleau...



Angel Shakespeare, Social Media Account Manager

Vanessa is very warm and welcoming. Before attending the sessions, I assumed the scenarios discussed would be around how to handle aggressive confrontations, but actually Vanessa discusses the everyday situations we deal with, such as micro-aggressions, to demonstrate how small events can be an indicator to bigger issues. I do believe that some employees would dread sessions like this being added to their diary, in fear of them being patronising or even triggering, but it couldn't be further from the truth. The sessions are relatable and most of all, non-judgemental.

When we think of diversity and inclusion, we first think of race, then maybe LGBTQ. In actual fact, Vanessa covers all areas including women, socioeconomics, and disability, ensuring no one is overlooked. I really value how Vanessa ensures diversity is just that and asks us not to assume because someone is male or white that they haven't experienced hardship.

There have been moments where I have learnt things about my colleagues that I would have never expected. The session in which Vanessa listed 10 questions which asked things such as, 'during your childhood, did you ever go hungry?' or 'have you experienced prejudice due to your appearance?', will stay in my mind maybe forever. The number of high scores amongst my colleagues was astounding. My score was much lower than everyone else's when I always consider myself to be maybe one of the less privileged in my London office. It made me thankful for what I have but also

intrigued to know more about the people around me.

For me, the biggest takeaway is never to assume. I have learnt that there is always a way to tackle what may seem a difficult conversation initially and not to shy away, because by shying away you're missing a great learning opportunity. It also reinforces the idea of shame, when as a society we should be moving towards being loud and proud about all the aspects of our culture that make us who we are today.

I am proud of who I am, as a woman from Gypsy decent (my grandad still lives the lifestyle), and I can say Vanessa has helped somewhat towards that. I was always a proud woman, but the gypsy part has always been something I have kept quiet because I am often in the presence of racism, even from people I consider friends. But since seeing the changes around me in my workplace and feeling empowered by the conversations we've had I do feel comfortable being more open about this, knowing that I would be respected and valued. I will also not shy away from speaking out about women's issues, in fear of being seen as 'too feminist' or emasculating the men around me, because we should all be contributing to equality in the everyday conversations we have.

I will also work hard to ensure everyone around me feels comfortable enough to be proud of who they are and where they have come from, whether I can relate personally or not.

“THIS WAS ONE OF THE MOST INSIGHTFUL, ENERGETIC AND POSITIVE ED&I TRAININGS I'VE EVER BEEN TO.”

“A VERY HONEST SPACE AND IT WAS FUN TO HEAR EVERYONE'S OPINIONS WITHOUT JUDGEMENT. THAT'S THE KIND OF SAFE SPACE VANESSA CREATES.”

Race in PR

Kajal Shah, Account Director:

Lived experiences are critical to understanding how important Open Conversations are. Here, Kajal Shah, Account Director in PHA's Corporate team and member of the ED&I committee shares her personal experience prior to joining PHA. Kaj's lived experience shows why more conversations and education are critical to driving change.

I have worked in the PR and Comms industry for over ten years now and within my career journey have experienced unconscious bias, stereotypical language designed to label you an 'outsider', microaggressions in the workplace and pay equity gaps, and slower promotion pathways (none of these experiences, including those detailed below have happened whilst at PHA).

Imposter syndrome and a pressure to act in a certain way to fit the desired corporate mould is also common particularly with intersectional identities. I have been judged by my name before I have even opened my mouth – with the common question being ... “yes but where are you really from??” and comments like “you speak so well”, “you absolute terrorist” or mocking Indian accents and reciting their favourite curry house order. In one previous place of work, homophobia was taken seriously and escalated and resolved if someone took offence yet racism was termed as “oh, it's just banter – can't you take a joke? Demoralising, vicious and btw not funny.

People from underrepresented groups tend to find it difficult to enter the industry and then to progress in organisations; this is

because they do not see people like them represented or in positions of power. It is important for us to be able to showcase role models who don't necessarily conform – whether people with disabilities, black and ethnic minority employees, women leaders, or those who have struggled with social mobility or are neurodiverse. More work needs to be done with intersectionality and we should celebrate the diversity of our industry and recognise that talent comes in all kinds.

It is known saying among BAME communities that 'non white' people have to work twice as hard to get the recognition and opportunities they deserve. We need to overturn these sentiments and factors that stifle progression, talent and the success of diverse employees.

Changes are taking place as companies move the ED&I mission forward and it is everyone's responsibility to strengthen an inclusive culture, improve equity, reflect on our assumptions and build awareness of others' lived experiences to shift our behaviours and mindsets.

The Open Conversations we have been having at PHA is helping us to move beyond words and into action and I look forward to seeing this industry change for the better.



Commitment to the future:

We recognise that change doesn't happen overnight, and although we have made improvements, we are still on a journey to improve our talent management, education and awareness for Race, Religion and Belief. We also want to put time and thought into how we can best support our clients and continue to produce campaigns that speak to all audiences. A focus going into the next year will be working with organisations including People Like Us – an award-winning, not-for-profit that celebrates and supports media, marketing, and comms professionals from Black, Asian, Mixed Race and minoritised ethnic backgrounds – to share our campaigns with the wider PR community.

We will continue to embed Anti-Racism across organisational policies and processes; to tackle unconscious bias in the workplace; and to create a safe space for employees to share experiences with co-workers and highlight gaps in diversity policies to inform change.

Finally, we hope to support our senior leaders with a training session to increase their knowledge of intercultural competence to inform development plans and specific ED&I goals as part of their annual goal-setting processes.

GENDER & ETHNICITY

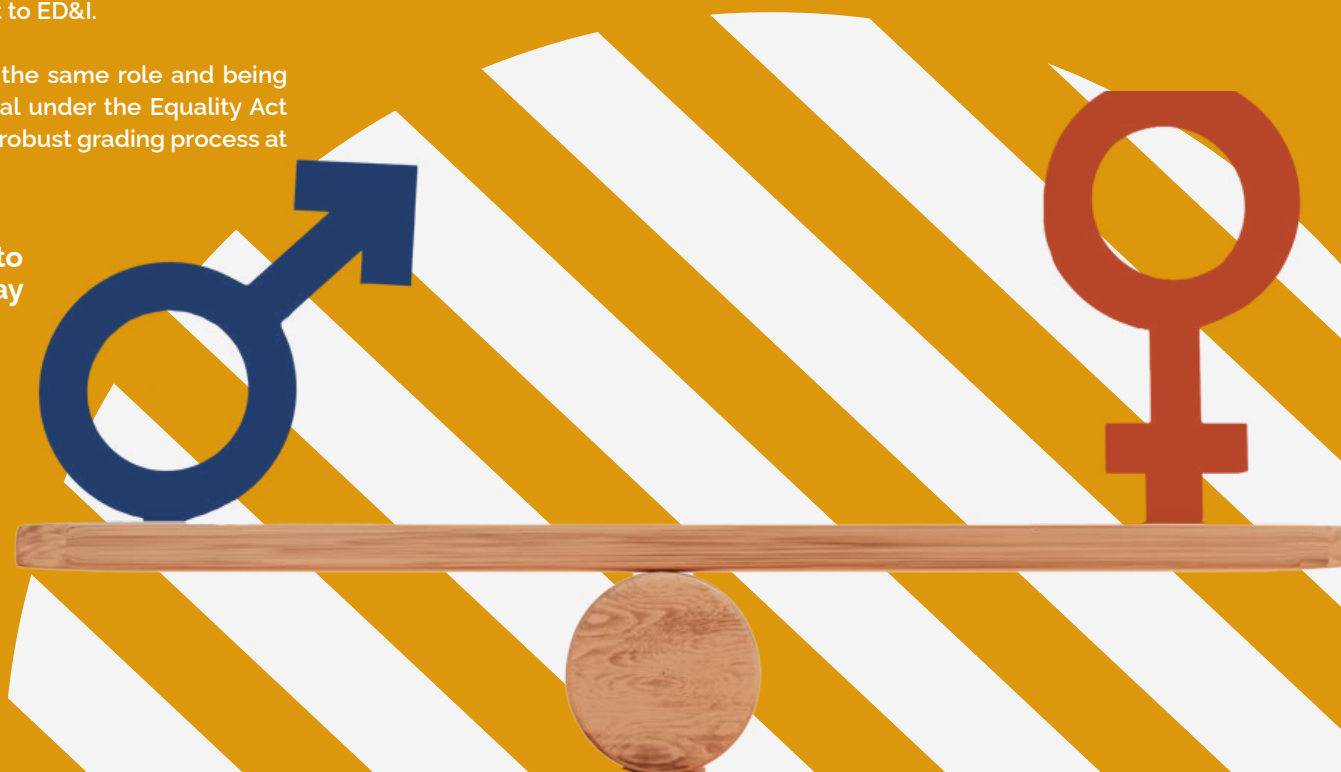
PAY GAP

In 2017 the Government made it mandatory for all businesses employing more than 250 people to report their gender pay gap. Whilst this is a huge step in the right direction, we believe it doesn't go far enough and that companies of all sizes should be requested to share their data. Therefore, we have chosen voluntarily to publish our gender and ethnicity pay gap annually through our Open Conversations report.

Pay gap reporting is a complex calculation that should never be looked at in isolation. There are many factors in addition to pay gap reporting that demonstrate the commitment of a business to ED&I and we hope that our transparency in publishing our data, along with the other details in this report, show our long-term commitment to ED&I.

Pay gap reporting is not illustrative of two people performing the same role and being paid a different amount for those services. This would be illegal under the Equality Act 2010. At PHA we are committed to being transparent and have a robust grading process at all levels to ensure all at a particular level are paid equivalently.

As you review our data, please take the time to understand the methodology for calculating pay gaps which we have explained in detail below.



The gender and ethnicity pay gap explained

The gender pay gap is the difference between the average (mean or median) earnings of men and women across a workforce.

The ethnicity pay gap is the difference between the average (mean or median) earnings of white and ethnically diverse employees.

The pay gap calculations are based on an employer's payroll data drawn from a specific date each year. This specific date is called the 'snapshot date' and for the purposes of this report, our date range is September 2021 to September 2022.

How a pay gap is calculated:

Gender pay gap

The gender pay gap figure is typically calculated by first adding together all the annual salaries of women, then finding the median salary — that is, the salary that's in the exact middle, with 50% of the women earning more than that figure and 50% earning less. Then the same calculation is made for men working full-time equivalent, year-round. Once those two figures are determined, you can compare them and calculate the pay gap.

The mean is calculated by adding together all the salaries of women and dividing it by the number of women within the organisation. The calculation is repeated for men and the percentage difference between the two figures provides the mean data point.

For the purposes of this report, we have chosen to report both the Median and Mean pay gap.

Ethnicity pay gap

The ethnicity pay gap figure is typically calculated by first adding together all the annual salaries of ethnically diverse employees, then finding the median salary — that is, the salary that's in the exact middle, with 50% of the ethnic diverse employees earning more than that figure and 50% earning less. Then the same calculation is made for white employees working full-time equivalent, year-round. Once those two figures are determined, you can compare them and calculate the pay gap.

The mean is calculated by adding together all the salaries of ethnically diverse employees and dividing it by the number of ethnically diverse employees within the organisation. The calculation is repeated for white employees and the percentage difference between the two figures provides the mean data point.

For the purposes of this report, we have chosen to report both the Median and Mean pay gap.

Our workforce:

A lack of diversity remains a problem across the UK PR industry and something we are committed to playing our part in changing. This isn't something that can immediately be fixed, but it starts with us taking a step back and reviewing where we need to improve by taking stock of the data at hand.

At PHA, our workforce is predominantly female, with 59.34% identifying as female and 40.66% as male. The latest PRCA Communications Census, published in 2021, reported an industry average of 67% female and 33% male.

Meanwhile, our ethnicity data shows that 80.9% employees identify as white and 19.1% identify as ethnically diverse. In comparison to the 2021 PRCA Communications Census data, the industry average of employees identifying as white is 87%, while 13% identify as ethnically diverse.

Our Senior Leadership Team data shows that we currently have 60% of our team who identify as female and 100% who identify as white.

Gender pay gap

The gender pay gap is a measure of the difference between the average earnings of employees across the business who identify as female, regardless of role or seniority, as of a snapshot date. The reason that the percentage is rarely zero is that it depends on the roles that men and women have in the business. For example, if more women work in lower-paid roles, there will be a gender pay gap.

Please note: The gender pay gap is not illustrative of men and women performing the same role and being paid a different amount for this. This would be illegal under the Equality Act 2010.

PHA Gender pay gap:

Mean: **4.58%**

Median: **4.29%**

**PR industry average
Gender pay gap: 12.7%**

Reference: PRCA Communications Census



Ethnicity pay gap

The ethnicity pay gap is a measure of the difference between the average earnings of employees across the business who identify as white and ethnically diverse, regardless of role or seniority, as of a snapshot date. The reason that the percentage is rarely zero is that it depends on the roles that white and or ethnically diverse employees have in the business. For example, if lower-paid roles are fulfilled by ethnically diverse employees, there will be an ethnic pay gap.

Please note: The ethnicity pay gap is not illustrative of white and ethnically diverse performing the same role and being paid a different amount for this. This would be illegal under the Equality Act 2010.

PHA Ethnicity pay gap:

Mean: **5.29%**

Median: **1.49%**

**PR industry average
ethnicity pay gap: 16%**

Reference: PRCA Communications Census

This is the first time we have published our gender and ethnicity pay gap and we are pleased with how we are performing. Whilst we are focused on our own performance, we can be proud of how we are benchmarking against the rest of the industry, and we hope that in the coming years more of the industry will start to report their pay gaps.

Our gender diversity is particularly pleasing, with our SLT made up of 60% women, many of whom have progressed through the business from Executive roles. We recognise that we have more work to do to address the lack of ethnic diversity in our SLT and will be doing all we can over the coming years to support all staff with their career progression and desires to move into senior roles in the business.

There is always more that can be done, and this is very much a starting point, but a starting point we can be proud of with solid foundations in place for us to build on.

GENDER & SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Gender identity and sexual orientation forms a key part of our strategy. PHA has always strived to create a safe and inclusive workplace that champions equality, regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity. Our head office is based in Soho – the beating heart of the UK's LGBTQ+ scene – and we have always celebrated events that promote women and the LGBTQ+ community, such as International Women's Day and PRIDE. But we knew more needed to be done to improve awareness and educate employees about different experiences at work, particularly amongst LGBTQ+ employees who make up 7.55% of our workforce.

Training has been key to addressing certain education gaps within the business to foster a workplace that champions equality for all protected characteristic groups. Part of this has been engaging charity partner Mind Out, who created a tailored programme for PHA to improve LGBTQ+ awareness within the business and support colleagues within the community.

We have created environments for staff to have healthy and important discussion about issues associated with gender identity and sexual orientation, including our 'Open Conversations' forum where we discuss a range of topics such as women in sport, engaging with PRIDE in a meaningful way, and how to be a better ally to both women and people in the LGBTQ+ community.



Intersectionality, trans allyship, and cisgender privilege training

We appointed training partner, Mind Out, a mental health charity supporting the LGBTQ+ community, to educate staff on issues relating to gender identity, intersectionality, trans allyship, pronouns, and cisgender privilege. Sessions led by trainer Alice Booth fostered a learning environment where people could be open, and air views in a safe environment, but also have their preconceptions challenged to encourage a more inclusive mindset.

We also held dedicated sessions for SLT and People & Culture to inform leadership principles and disrupt discrimination through affirmative practice. This involved looking at how affirmative principles can be adopted across all agency levels, in addition to supporting minority identities surrounding sexuality, gender identity, gender expression, and more. Our trainer also delivered a session on how to make LGBTQ+ people count in data and legislative policy, which is allowing our team to better collect, protect, and present employee data.

"The PHA Group training attendees were very engaged and openminded to learning about LGBTQ+ and mental health awareness topics. We consistently experienced high attendance and active discussions in all six of the training sessions we hosted. The participants always emerged from the interactive breakout rooms with positive and creative ideas for greater LGBTQ+ inclusion at the company. I witnessed many moments of tangible progress along the way, for example, training attendees committing to include their pronouns on their email signatures. The group was also eager to demonstrate their commitment as a company and make their position on LGBTQ+ issues clear to their clients by adding LGBTQ+ inclusion language into their communication and contracts. It is my belief that these open and nuanced discussions about LGBTQ+ inclusion amongst the team wouldn't have happened without the dedicated training space to do so. MindOut is proud to be a training provider for The PHA Group and wish them well on their continued ED&I journey."

Alice Fox, Trainer, MindOut LGBTQ+ Mental Health Service



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Progressive campaigns

We have been very lucky to have had the opportunity to work with, and champion, many female-led organisations, in addition to businesses committed to supporting the LGBTQ+ community.

Through our ED&I strategy and training programme, we are giving staff the tools to support campaigns centred around women's rights or the LGBTQ+ community, and to help educate clients in the process. This allows us to create more impactful campaigns for clients that are meaningful and progressive. As PR consultants, we need to be equipped to advise our clients on public discourse, correct messaging, and cultural trends. Understanding issues related to gender identities and sexual orientation is central to this.

Encouraging an open dialogue

Last February, our Charity & CSR team launched the Talkathon. This was a three-day event of presentations and discussions led by internal and external speakers, covering a variety of topics in support of our charity partner for 2021/2022, CALM. With it also being LGBTQ+ history month, ED&I committee members Dec and Chris led a discussion on Sexuality and Creative Expression. During this they explored LGBTQ+ history up to the present day and led a discussion about their own personal coming out stories.

“It was extremely powerful and engaging and I feel very lucky to have heard your personal experiences. I certainly learnt a lot.”

In July, the ED&I committee held an Open Conversations forum on women in sport, a hot topic at the time with England's women's football team winning the Euros. In this session ED&I committee member Helen chaired a discussion where we were joined by a panel of PHA 'experts', including our Head of Sport and Fitness, Tom Inskip, Sports & Fitness Account Manager; Eva El Khoury, rugby player and Account Manager on Consumer & Lifestyle, Bethany Robinson; and marathon runner on Consumer & Lifestyle and Account Manager, Megan Steer. The panel discussed the perceptions of women in sport, as well as media coverage and what more can be done to encourage women in traditionally male dominated sports.

**“IT WAS BRILLIANT!
VERY REFRESHING
TO HAVE A DIFFERENT
KIND OF SESSION”**

**“FUNNY, INFORMATIVE,
AND ENTERTAINING”**

“LOVED IT, FANTASTIC ENGAGING AND KNOWLEDGEABLE HOST, AS EVER THE FIRST PERSON/ LIVED EXPERIENCE SESSIONS ARE MORE AUTHENTIC AND MEMORABLE”

Pride 2022

PHA celebrated Pride in July, with the month dedicated to all things LGBTQ+. ED&I member Sophie and Sean Hamilton, Senior Associate Director, led a special Pride edition Newsroom session, where specific LGBTQ+ publications were examined and discussed.

Our Open Conversations forum for this month discussed what Pride is and its continued importance, examining how businesses approach their communications and marketing during Pride, and what is effective versus what is not. Yes! It was brilliantly led and so nice to speak openly about things that perhaps we shy away from or are too embarrassed to share when we make mistakes.

To conclude our celebration of Pride month, we welcomed the fabulous Drag Queen Crayola to PHA, who held a fun and engaging session. Crayola started the session off with a tongue-in-cheek song about growing up gay and then followed with a Pride-themed quiz and a Q&A session. The session provided insight around 50 years of Pride in the UK, the history and societal challenges that are still very much experienced in 2022. Crayola created an open and honest space for employees to ask any question and we mean ANY!!

Commitment to the future

The past year has been a first step in our ongoing commitment to LGBTQ+ education. Moving forward, we will build on the partnerships and training sessions we have activated to ensure any new starters and joiners also get the chance to participate. We will look to encourage regular engagement from all employees in training, especially sessions that encourage conversations and education, that's why we'll be continuing to request employee feedback following each session, forge relationships with subject matter experts and ensure our employees know PHA is a safe space to share their views and opinions.

Whilst events like PRIDE and International Women's Day raise awareness, we know that conversations need also to happen outside of these times and recognise gender and sexual orientation should be an everyday focus. The ongoing strategy within the committee will ensure that, whilst we celebrate these moments, we are continually giving a voice to LGBTQ+ education and Women's Rights at PHA and help our agency clients and partners to do the same.

PARENT & CAREGIVERS

Helping to support, grow and connect with the parents and caregivers at PHA is an important element of our ED&I mission. We have dedicated time over the last 12 months not only to provide training, but also to increase everyone's understanding of what it's like to be a parent or caregiver.

We wanted to build a safe space where employees could come to learn and share, creating an internal community for colleagues to access support and guidance from their peers.



Natasha Oakland,
Senior People & Culture Manager



Enhanced maternity, paternity and adoption leave

Supporting staff as they start their journey to parenthood is important to us. We want to celebrate our staff who choose to become parents and create a working environment that allows them to feel supported at all stages.

In the past year we have reviewed a number of policies that show our commitment and which we hope will encourage more staff to continue to work at PHA as they juggle becoming a parent. Our policies include:

- **Enhanced maternity leave of six months paid leave**
- **Enhanced paternity leave of six weeks paid leave**

These policies are also offered to staff who start their families through adoption.

We also know that the journey to starting a family is a unique one and so to support all our staff with however they become parents, we offer a Fertility support policy that gives any staff undergoing fertility treatment extra days paid leave to use whilst they are undergoing treatment.

Flexibility

Working from home was a popular trend leading up to the pandemic, however it has become a staple in our routines and for the better. It affords people who have someone to care for, whether that's children or adults, the flexibility to be there for them without having to take time away from work.

Our flexible work opportunities allow employees who are working parents the important time they need to be with their families. In addition to our hybrid working charter, where any employee has the flexibility to work from home, and attend the office four days a month, 7.55% of our workforce also work to flexible routines, which helps to give them a healthy work-life balance. Whether that's returning to work following maternity leave 3-4 days a week or amended hours, reasonable adjustments are always made whether an employee is a parent, carer or for an alternative reason that works for them. We hope to give working parents and caregivers the time they need to attend to their families.

After the arrival of my little boy in 2021, I was both excited and nervous about the prospect of returning to work following my maternity leave. For me, returning on a part-time basis was important, so I could spend more time with my son, while not putting my career on pause. The process of applying for flexible working was so simple and I was delighted when my request to work four days a week was approved. I was also able to use my accrued holiday to do a phased return to work, making the whole process much less daunting, having been away for a year.

The Hybrid Working Charter in place at PHA is also of huge benefit; as we're only required to complete a minimum of four days per month in our primary office, so I have the option to work from home three days a week. With no commute, I can enjoy breakfast with my son, and put him to bed at the end of the day. Having Wednesday Wellness Hours too means I can also spend that extra time with my little boy (when he's at home). Having this flexibility means that office days are an exciting change; a great opportunity to catch up with colleagues, have face-to-face meetings, and spend time with my team.

I've now been working part-time for five months, and it's been working really well for me. The flexibility offered by PHA enables me to have a good work life balance and enjoy time with my son while he's still small. I'm lucky to have an excellent team who can ensure People & Culture support is available on my non-working day. Managing my workload over four days too hasn't presented too many challenges; organisation is key!



Parent Focus Group

With 17.92% of our workforce identifying as a parent or caregiver we felt it was important to ensure we worked with those individuals to understand their needs, challenges, and the support they require.

We began this process by asking for volunteers to take part in a focus group session where we asked each of them to talk about their own experiences, and what more PHA could do to support them in their day-to-day role. Not only did we identify several trends because of this session, but we also identified that individuals enjoyed the close support group to talk about what it is really like to be a parent or caregiver and work alongside those responsibilities.

From our first session held this summer we have already implemented several initiatives.

They include:

Sharing companywide updates on email following our monthly in-person employee awards to part-time or flexible working employees unable to attend.

'Get to know me' series where we will shine a spotlight on people across the agency, telling employees a little more about their professional and personal lives to increase understanding.

Quarterly focus groups for parents and caregivers to feed in directly to our People & Culture, ED&I committee, and senior management.

Our commitment to the future

We recognise that the work we do to support parents and caregivers at PHA is ever evolving, that's why we have committed to running quarterly focus group sessions to gain invaluable insight into what our employees need during important milestones in their lives. It is also an opportunity to share information for those employees who might be thinking of becoming a parent or may need to care for a loved one later in life.

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Tom Clarke, Senior Sales & Marketing Manager

When I powered down my laptop prior to the early May Bank Holiday kicking-off, I was aware that I might not be returning to work, come the Tuesday, but all in likelihood I probably would be, given only 4% of babies are born on their due date.

Of course, this meant that Alfie, our first, decided just an hour and half into his due date that this was the right time to start making moves. Cue frantic 4am emails to colleagues, whilst my wife, bouncing on an exercise ball, glared menacingly at me from the corner of the room.

At PHA, we're fortunate to be offered enhanced paternity leave, meaning that due to being at the agency for more than twelve months, I could take up to four weeks leave but as a minimum had to take the statutory two weeks. I opted to take three and leave an extra week for later in the year.

Three whole weeks off work, I thought to myself, 'Wow, what am I going to do with all this free time?!' and then it suddenly dawned on me that I wouldn't be getting much sleep and our lives would never be the same again.

Like most new parents, those first couple of weeks were a blur, consisting of calls to NHS helplines in the early hours of the morning, to walking around our local park like sleep-deprived zombies.

It was only by the third week that we started to feel like ourselves again and had begun to put the early stages of a routine together to move forward with. It's funny though, because just when you think you've got the hang of something, babies have a funny way of throwing another curveball your way, but I guess that is all part of the game called parenting.

I've always felt incredibly supported by my colleagues at PHA during my five years at the business, but especially so during those first couple of weeks, when returning to work. Well wishes were passed on; Alfie was celebrated at our summer party, and my workday was simplified whilst colleagues took on extra to support me.

The PHA Group has been extremely supportive and continues to be, and I can't thank them enough for their understanding throughout the last four months.



GLOSSARY

ED&I

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

Open Conversations Forum

an in-person and virtual session where conversation amongst employees is encouraged. The sessions are hosted by our committee and anyone is welcome to participate.

Newsroom

A session run by former journalists where newspapers, magazines and online media are reviewed and discussed in an open forum.

Pronouns

A pronoun is a word or a group of words that someone may substitute for a noun or noun phrase. For example he/him/his and they/them/there.

LGBTQ+

The acronym for lesbian, gay, bi, trans, queer, questioning and ace. N. Non-binary.

Gender pay gap

The gender pay gap or gender wage gap is the average difference between the remuneration for men and women who are working.

Ethnicity pay gap

The ethnicity pay gap shows the difference in the average pay between staff from ethnic minority backgrounds in a workforce, compared to those who identify as white.





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Hayley Bromfield,
Head of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

Challenging conversions lead to change. We're committed to making PHA an agency where people feel inspired, connected, respected, and heard, and we will continue to champion inclusive and diverse practices that are actioned every day. This is only the beginning.



PHA
GROUP