

**PHA**GROUP

**OPEN  
CONVERSATIONS  
ANNUAL REPORT**

2023





# **WELCOME TO OUR 2023 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 diverse and inclusive in both policy and practice. This is the second year PHA has committed to publishing this report. We have spent the year building on the foundations set out in 2022, and focusing on how we can evolve and improve the programme of activity we can offer employees. The report is a true testament to the hard work and dedication our committee and employees put into our annual strategy.

# EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION COMMITTEE



**Hayley Bromfield**  
Director of Sales & Marketing



**Mimi Brown**  
Director of Corporate



**Helen Salvin**  
Associate Director



**Tom Clarke**  
Senior Sales & Marketing Manager



**Ruby Kite**  
Talent Lead



**Sophie Bassil**  
Senior Account Manager



**Josie Oldham**  
Talent Manager



**Sarah Lietzow**  
Junior Account Executive



**Harry Cox**  
Account Manager



**Chris Smith**  
Senior People & Culture Executive



**Tara Baaj**  
Account Manager

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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.



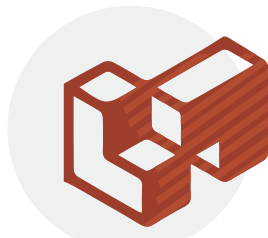
# OUR OBJECTIVES

We have committed ourselves to delivering an ED&I strategy that addresses five core areas.



## 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.

# WE SAID, WE DID

Our Open Conversations initiative sits at the heart of PHA operations and we are working to also translate this into all our client and partner work. It is built around five core objectives, which we are doing our very best to deliver against, with the support and feedback of our employees and partners.

The following slides share an overview of activity delivered under each of these objectives over the past year.



## GROW

**We will 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.**

We have gone beyond discussion and taken action to bring in outside voices, receiving high performing culture training from Vanessa Belleau – who never fails to challenge us, and delivering the .amplify summer series with the help of varied perspectives from across the industry to help us embed equitable and diverse practice in our day to day client work.

Data showed we are a largely secular organisation so we have further engaged with personal faith topics as well as marking religious holidays.

We have also invited guest speakers from across the LGBTQ+ communities for social and training sessions – from Jack Doyle to drag bingo.

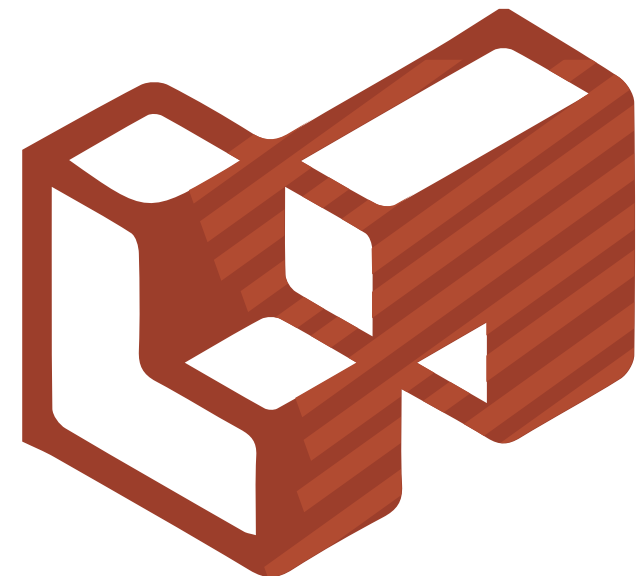
## ENGAGE

**We will ENGAGE mindfully in open and frequent dialogues to ensure that each employee and client feels valued, included, and respected.**

We hold quarterly breakfast with the MD sessions with an open and fully anonymised call-out for staff questions in each meeting. The data from the annual staff survey informed a number of benefits and operational changes, and has been re-run this year to specifically cover employee motivations for engagement – or not – with ED&I initiatives.

100% of staff who have attended the Open Conversations discussion sessions said they were comfortable sharing their views in the environment created.

We've organised a number of Lived Experience sessions covering disability and neurodiversity where employees openly shared their experiences with colleagues across the business.



## PROTECT

We will PROTECT our employees. 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.

- Bystander training and 'Courageous Conversations' training was delivered to help all employees identify and address difficult conversations or unacceptable behaviour in and outside of work, empowering people to deal with circumstances safely and effectively in different contexts.
- Created a bespoke reasonable adjustments training, and delivered hiring manager training to ensure that additional needs are effectively flagged and addressed for an accessible, inclusive workplace.
- Strengthened relationships with clients, bringing them in to the conversation to understand our expectations of polite and respectful working relationships.



## FOCUS

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

- Implemented more training on neurodiversity in the business, working with two external training partners to equip our client account teams and People & Culture colleagues.
- Re-launched the PHA Accelerate internship programme with an ongoing commitment to paying London Living Wage.
- Our recruitment team uses tools to anonymise LinkedIn candidate profiles, with personal identifiers removed for all CVs sent to hiring managers.
- We have run several CV workshops and created an inclusive interview prep guide to support applicants.
- Have partnered with Creative Access, the 10,000 Interns Foundation, PR Mums, and Braver to attract and support a diverse workforce.
- Maintained a 100% return to work rate after parental leave.

## PROMOTE

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

- Introduced a checklist to inform and guide representative and inclusive partnership work with third parties.
- Implemented a Disability Leave Policy to further support people living with long term conditions.
- We enhanced our parental leave policies and adjusted our flexible working hours to offer more flexibility especially to those with care obligations. 100% of flexible working requests were granted in the past 12 months.



# A LETTER FROM OUR MDS

Open conversations encourage people to share their views and experiences without fear of judgement. Our goal through our Open Conversations strategy is to create a workplace where everyone feels that their voice is not just heard but respected and understood. Whilst challenging conversations might be difficult to have, they lead to change.

We have been open and honest about the journey we are on, the fact we are not perfect, but are committed to improving how we work together to build a truly inclusive identity and culture at PHA.

We have consciously exposed ourselves to feedback, good and bad, from our staff and from outside experts, and reflected on the initiatives our industry peers have made in this area as well as society in general.

Our understanding of what ED&I means for us as an agency has evolved over the past year and no doubt will continue to do so. What we have learnt is that ED&I needs to become a part of the fabric of our agency. Why it matters must resonate with every single member of staff and client and our

challenge is how we continuously nurture an inclusive culture that everyone feels a part of.

We have endeavoured to build a culture and an environment that everyone who works for PHA can enjoy and flourish in, which is fair and equal, and which has kindness and respect at its heart.

Our team dedicated to equity, diversity, and inclusion has played a crucial role in developing a comprehensive and informative training program, events calendar and expanded our network and partnerships. The program features industry leaders as speakers and provides safe and supportive forums for us to share our feedback and personal perspectives.

As we review the past year, we feel a huge sense of pride for what has been achieved along with a clearer understanding of what more we need to do. We are always listening and learning.

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

*Shelley & Stuart*

Shelley & Stuart  
Joint Group Managing Directors





**29**

new permanent  
hires



**34%**

of staff are male



**66%**

of staff are female



**41%**

of SLT are male



**59%**

of SLT are female



**18%**

of employees are  
parents/carers



**11%**

Of our staff identify  
as LGBTQ+



**18%**

Of our staff are from an  
ethnic minority



**72%**

of our employees  
attended University



**57%**

of employees were  
promoted In the  
past 12 months

## OUR COMMUNITY

We are committed to building and celebrating a team that reflects the society that we live in, and to nurturing an inclusive, welcoming, supportive working environment for all. Here is a snapshot of our community at PHA in 2023.

**97%**

ED&I forms completed (3% of ED&I  
forms not completed/only selected  
prefer not to say)

**114**

employees, including 2 interns

# RECRUITMENT & TALENT

The PHA Group remains 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.

Since the publication of our last report, we have maintained our inclusive approach to recruitment while continuing to increase the number of hires from a wide range of social identity groups. This includes posting adverts via job boards and networks used by underrepresented groups, assessing candidates on transferrable skills rather than exclusively considering like-for-like profiles, using a tool that hides candidates' names and photos on LinkedIn, removing personal details from CVs before sending to hiring managers, and offering reasonable adjustments and as much flexibility as possible for interviews, the majority of which are attended by a diverse panel.

In 2023, we started planning and implementing initiatives that positively impacted the groups that remained disproportionately underrepresented, namely those living with a neurodivergent condition and/or meeting social mobility criteria, which required a more bespoke and impactful strategy. Examples of this include creating an inclusive interview preparation guide for candidates, publishing educational blog content, and running several CV workshops. We continue to implement measures to support talent from all backgrounds, groups, and identities.

## Programmes

We started the year by launching our internship programme, PHA.Accelerate. Knowing the impact of providing genuine and inclusive learning opportunities for grassroots talent, the three-month programme aims to reduce the age-old industry stigma, and reality, of securing a job based on who you know, not what you know. Our programme pays all interns no matter where they are located in the UK the London Living Wage, provides a 20-page handbook of useful resources, an induction and training schedule, a buddy and mentor, and involves fortnightly feedback sessions, organised lunches, mid and end of placement check-ins, and a £50 referral voucher.

Conscious of the echo chamber in which we work, we made a concerted effort to share and receive insight this year. Our Talent Lead (Ruby) and Talent Manager (Josie) presented at industry events in London and Manchester organised by In-House Recruitment and The Firm, and engaged in a number of roundtable discussions with talent leaders across a variety of sectors. They also joined an employer panel at the University of Leeds during their Professionalism Week, as well as their annual careers fair. This created pathways to discuss the industry and the careers within in it with grassroots talent who may not have previously been aware of the opportunities.

To ensure best practice and consistency, the team imparted their knowledge with hiring managers across the agency on inclusivity in the recruitment process, advising on how to recognise and avoid unconscious bias, and offering ways in which PHA can provide and implement reasonable adjustments.



**Trishia Amores,  
Intern**



I am halfway through my placement and I have learnt so much during my time here. It was daunting at first moving to a big city for my first internship, but I have settled in quickly and got the hang of my weekly tasks. There is a lot to take in for the first few weeks, but everyone is so supportive and reassuring that extra time will be spent to provide 1-to-1 training on how to navigate certain platforms and the assignments. The mentoring scheme has been a great help to my learning, as I can discuss any difficulties I have or receive any tips that would increase the efficiency of my work. Overall, the programme has helped me have a greater understanding of a Sales & Marketing in a comms agency, and I can't wait to see what the rest of my internship will have in store for me!



## 11 Recruitment & Talent

### Partnerships

Our partnership with the Taylor Bennett Foundation continued, and included hosting quarterly masterclasses for trainees, providing four mentors, creating various resources and content for entry-level talent, and attending a handful of invaluable networking and fundraising events.

**TAYLOR BENNETT  
FOUNDATION**

After an insightful talk and CV workshop with an engaged group of PR Master's students, we have established a new partnership with De Monfort University, supporting with their Lead & Inspire programme. This six-week skills development scheme for students

belonging to ethnically-diverse backgrounds involves setting a real-life client brief and judging their presentations, with the winning team joining us in 2024 for a week of work experience across our PR, Social, and Digital departments.

**Annabel Bailey,  
Account Manager**



Annabel, Account Manager in our Sport & Fitness team shares her experience as a mentee:

"Being a Taylor Bennett Foundation mentor has been a really rewarding process. At the start of the programme, my mentee had little understanding of how PR works, and was unsure as to what career path she wanted to go down. Through regular meetings, we were able to cover everything from what a typical day as a PR looks like and how to write basic press materials, to drafting cover letters and introduction emails to PR firms. At the end of the programme, I received a lovely email from my mentee thanking me for everything, saying that I've really helped her understand what she wants to do with her career. It was also great to hear that she had been successful in securing a summer internship – a great way to wrap up the programme!"

Employees hired in 2023 who were hired into permanent positions and chose to disclose their ED&I information.

**76%**

belong to at least one under-represented group

**54%**

were not privately and/or university-educated

**40%**

are ethnically-diverse

**20%**

belong to the LGBTQ+ community

**12%**

live with a disability or neurodivergent condition



**Mariel Malabanan,**  
**Account Director**



### Moving to the UK

My decision to move from Australia to the UK and take on an Account Director role at a new agency came with equal parts excitement and nerves. Going in, I had a healthy dose of imposter syndrome to deal with, knowledge that twinges of homesickness would strike at odd moments, and a wariness I'd built up over my career being a person of a minority ethnic background carving out a career in communications. Thankfully, various people I had spoken to within and outside of The PHA Group spoke highly of the culture and all the P&C initiatives that the agency took a lot of pride in. My own experience quickly confirmed this when getting to know my team, feeling how open and generous everyone within the agency is with their time and knowledge, hearing other expat team members' experiences, and seeing how proactive the business was about creating spaces where we could explore and learn what it means for people from all walks of life to navigate the world we live in. Apart from some light ribbing on the Vegemite vs. Marmite debate, I'm happy that diversity of thought and lived experience is very much welcomed at The PHA Group. It's been really encouraging to have found my feet at a workplace that not only values great work, but is made up of the kind of warm, intelligent, and curious people that you want to be working alongside.



## Leaver Testimonials

In our ongoing journey towards fostering a diverse, inclusive, and equitable workplace, we recognise that our commitment to meaningful change extends beyond the experiences of our current team members and new starters. It also hinges on our willingness to listen to and learn from those who have chosen a different path: our leavers. Through their insights, we gain a deeper understanding of our successes and development areas. We also hope that what they have learnt through PHA training support them and their future colleagues in their roles and careers. On average, our leavers rated our ED&I committee, strategy, and efforts 8.3/10. We have also included a snapshot of their anonymised feedback below:

**“PHA HAS COME A LONG WAY IN THIS AREA FROM WHEN I STARTED. IT HAS A MORE DIVERSE RANGE OF EMPLOYEES NOW WHICH IS REALLY PROMISING TO SEE.”**

**“PHA'S COMMITMENT TO INCLUSIVITY AND DIVERSITY IS CLEAR TO SEE – I NEVER REALLY FELT LIKE A NEW STARTER.”**

**“I THINK PHA SETS ITSELF APART BY BEING A COMPANY YOU ARE PROUD TO WORK FOR. THE COMPANY HAS A GENUINE CARE FOR ITS EMPLOYEES AND THE ISSUES THAT MAY IMPACT THEM, AS WELL AS ISSUES IN A WIDER SOCIAL AND GEOPOLITICAL CONTEXT.”**

## Looking to the year ahead

We acknowledge that building and maintaining a diverse workforce starts with recruitment, and we are proud of the inclusive practices we have maintained, as well as the new programmes and partnerships we have established this year.

We also acknowledge that there is plenty of room for development and are therefore committed to several actions to continually push our strategy forward. We look forward to working with Creative Access, the 10,000 Interns Foundation, PR Mums, and Braver to recruit entry to senior-level talent from underrepresented groups with their support over the coming year. We are also excited to launch our new social mobility-focused work experience programme in 2024, PHA.workX.

In line with our commitment to continuous improvement, we welcome all feedback, as well as the opportunity to collaborate with other like-minded individuals and organisations in the industry.



# ACCESSIBILITY AT WORK

The term accessibility can be defined as the degree to which a product, device, service, or environment is available to as many people as possible, particularly in relation to these being meaningful and usable by disabled people.

Raising awareness of this, and championing and supporting employees with disabilities, accessibility needs, and the wider community has formed one of the central commitments of our strategy this year. We have looked to meet our commitments by focusing on education through training, with a specific focus on neurodiversity which was an area of accessibility we hadn't explored in depth as an agency before.

A review of PHA's policies was carried out to ensure the agency was offering as much support as possible to employees who are disabled or have accessibility needs. Following feedback from employees and open discussions about lived experiences, we listened to the needs of our employees and introduced a new dedicated Disability Leave policy. This policy makes a distinction between absence related to general sickness and an absence related to long-term disability and, amongst other support, offers employees 10 days of disability leave per twelve-month rolling period. Taking the time to speak with and listen to the experiences of our employees helped us to shape and develop this new policy and demonstrates the value of having open conversations.

We have hosted a number of lived experience sessions, where employees have felt comfortable talking to others about their experience of disability and neurodiversity. Himanshi Bajaj, kindly shared her experiences of living with ADHD, what it's like to walk a day in her shoes, and how others working with her or someone else with ADHD can support or recognise the signs. We're proud that our culture means employees feel safe to share, learn and talk about a variety of topics.

**Himanshi Bajaj,**  
**Account Executive**



I only got told by my therapist, fairly recently, that I have ADHD. It explained a lot, but I still denied it being there for the longest time. I had noticed that every time I spoke to someone about it, I got told that 'everyone has ADHD'. Although it feels more prevalent as more people are speaking about it, this still downplayed my own experience.

ADHD is the inability to regulate attention, not just a 'low attention span', and this where the hyperfocus comes in. I can get stuck for hours in the same place, looking at the same piece of content and breaking it down to the very last syllable. This was the misalignment that I noticed in people's perception of ADHD. So, I always wanted to give a bit of a briefing on it to colleagues - just to let them know that ADHD may not look like what everyone thinks it looks like and that it does not mean that everyone afflicted with ADHD is lazy or unable to work. So, when the opportunity

presented itself to talk about it at the Open Conversations Forum, I obviously took it.

My experience at PHA has been very positive when it comes to working with ADHD. I have trouble sitting still and my mind wanders all too easily - so I go outside a lot, walk the fuzziness off as it were. And everyone is cool with it! Sometimes I have bad mental health days wherein my mind refuses to focus on any one thing and there are a billion things running through my head. I am lucky enough to be a part of a team that understands that and allows me to work at my own pace on those days and even go as far as to cheer me up with good conversations and jokes.

I think it's a really good thing that we talk about disability as openly as we can. If you keep it all hidden - nobody would learn anything about anything!



## Understanding Neurodiversity

The Accessibility & Disability subcommittee put particular emphasis on training, given our commitments in last year's report to broaden our understanding of neurodiversity, physical disabilities and the team's ability to provide insight for employees to identify and recognise particularly needs or requirements by of those around us.

**We learnt that the term neurodiversity was not well understood within the agency. Therefore, much of our training has focused on sessions run by specialist providers to encourage more informal and personal discussions around the topic. This helped to debunk any misunderstandings and explained where to access information.**

This year we partnered with both AbilityNet and Lexxic, consultancies dedicated to providing company training and support on accessibility and neurodiversity, respectively. Initially, we worked with AbilityNet on how to produce accessible social media content, to benefit both PHA employees and our client's clients long term and understand any limitation that could impact our campaigns. Lexxic worked with us to produce a half-day training session for our People & Culture team to discuss neurodiversity and the considerations we need to understand as part of our talent attraction and retention program. We also hosted a workshop with our senior leadership team to focus on educating, with a particular emphasis on supporting employees who are neurodivergent, the reasonable adjustments that can be made for employees and

where to access reputable information if in need of further counsel. The senior lead session was to ensure understanding was being channeled from the top down in our teams.

**AbilityNet**

**Lexxic**

## DEFINITION:

Neurodiversity is the range of differences in the way that our brains are wired and process information and is an umbrella term which can describe conditions such as autism, ADHD, and dyslexia to name just a few.

## Encouraging an open dialogue

The Open Conversations forum is not a space where topics are simply presented to employees, it is a space where open dialogue can occur, and conversations can take place in a safe environment. The Accessibility and Disability team spoke to employees and asked what they knew about neurodiversity, the depth of their understanding, as well as discussing neurodiversity representation in the media. We encouraged people to share their experiences of neurodiversity.

To enhance this Open Conversations forum and to continue the discussions around neurodiversity, all staff screening sessions take place where a film/ documentary which explores themes of neurodivergence are showcased, with a discussion taking place after to examine what was learned. The first session was a screening of Made in Chelsea star Sam Thompson's documentary Is This ADHD.

## Creativity and diversity

This year we hosted sessions on accessibility through a creative lens in partnership with our Creative Director. Sessions on building awareness including 'Who you're pitching to and what you're pitching', were hosted to get employees thinking about the needs of others in the pitching process to clients (and to reflect on their own needs) when presenting. The session aimed to raise awareness around people who may require reasonable adjustments in meetings and pitches; from the look and feel of the deck, to the use of tech. This was broken down for both the employee and client perspective.



### This year creativity has been a core focus for the agency.

To take our colleagues on this journey with us, we embarked on a summer training programme that was designed to upskill & empower our teams; breaking down the campaign process, simplifying it & encouraging the adoption of new approaches & techniques to improve creative prowess.

A part of this programme was to highlight the importance of showing consideration for others when imagining a creative campaign, looking at this with an ED&I lens and how this should fold into everything we do.

We want to ensure we create campaigns that bring resonance and are helpful to the audiences we want to target, rather than just presenting groups for brand awareness, coverage & social traction.

And we're not experts. We're constantly learning from others, and this openness is crucial.

Through one of the summer sessions, we called upon a panel of experts to investigate other stages in the creative process, learning through lived experience & an honest discussion.

The panel included; Founder of Source Nine Insights, Rob Harrison, who focuses on systems thinking, deep ecology & non-violent communication to understand behaviour & create value for audiences through deep empathy; Hollie-Anne Brooks, an award-winning journalist, broadcaster and disability rights campaigner; Nyome Nicholas-Williams, a plus-size model

and daily activist, championing mental health, self-love, and acceptance; and the Director of Smile Train UK, Ian Vallance, who brought extensive professional experience in international medical, cultural, arts and heritage fundraising strategy development and delivery.



**Mike Chivers**  
**Creative Director**

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a long horizontal line followed by a series of loops and curves.

**PHA.amplify**

Conversation centred around three main themes:



**From where & how to gather data and form insight:** The importance of not just relying on and interpreting quantitative data only, so including secondary research trends reports and also adopting qualitative techniques to gain real opinions, emotions & feelings from your target audience about the subject matter you've been briefed on.



**Ideation:** Not to be single minded that your idea will work because you think it's a good idea, but to actually test it with the members of the audience you want to talk to. Is it positioned correctly? Is it helpful for them? Is it offensive or tone deaf? What else would they want to add?



**Talent selection:** To be aware of misjudged representation. This is not a tick box exercise. Selecting people because of their actual lived experience vs. their appearance, the colour of their skin, sexuality...



**Creative development and implementation:** Are we creating campaign assets and brand activities that our audience can consume and interact with. Have we thought about appropriate art direction and editing? Have we thought about accessibility? Is what we're creating enhancing that campaign we've built vs. directly creating negative, or worse, uncomfortable reactions and avoidance.

The aim of this discussion was to encourage teams to think differently about their approach and to feel confident that they can start having those conversations to achieve better representation for all.

And to further develop our own process, be honest about the areas we need to improve and put strategies in place to tackle these.



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 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.

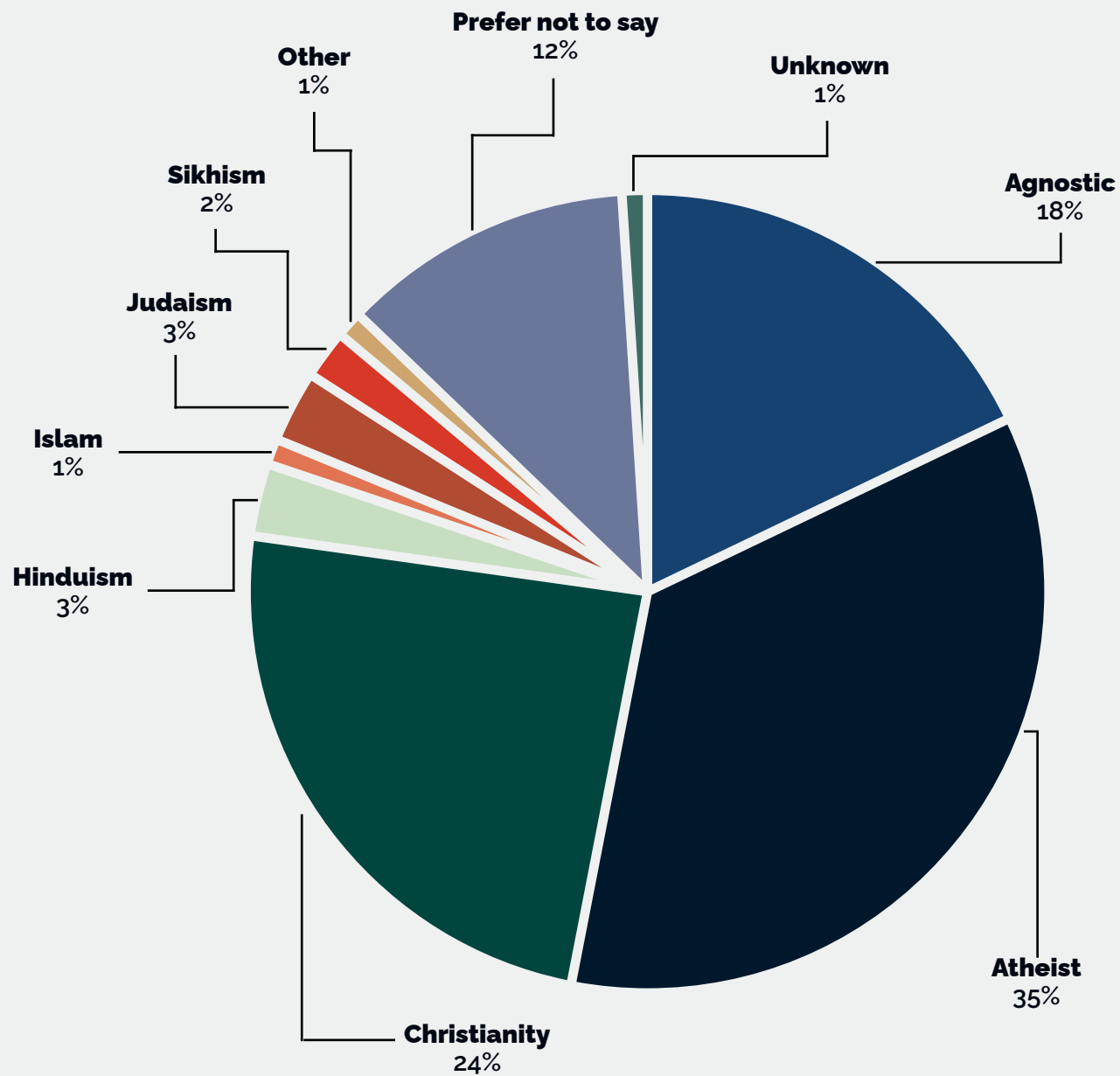
# RACE, RELIGION & BELIEF

## 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:**



**Helen Salvin**  
**Associate Director**



Helen Salvin, who spoke about her interest in astrology, said after the session,

"I always enjoy an open (and non-judgemental!) discussion about star signs. Naturally, there are sceptics, but increasingly, people are buying into the study of the Zodiac. The way I see it is that like anything spirituality-related, star signs should be used as a guide as opposed to a concrete prediction of events, and people should be respectful of a person's belief system – however weird it might seem!"

As personal belief continues to evolve, we will be embracing that as part of our ED&I strategy and ensuring whether traditional, or 'New Faith', employees feel safe to practice practise in a non-judgemental environment.

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

In the past year we have worked hard to openly communicate our commitment to ED&I in the workplace. With a plethora of training, as well as peer-led sessions, we have built a culture within the agency which encourages open, honest, and transparent conversations.

At the outset of the year, to assess where our priorities should lie, we analysed our employee data to align our priorities with the makeup of our workforce, to ensure everything we do as a committee is focused on what really matters to our employees.

**For example, looking at our data it was clear that as an agency, we are largely secular.**

To adapt to that, whilst we still marked the religious holidays that were represented within our agency, we also embraced the concept of personal faith and belief more widely – something that has evolved greatly. This resulted in employees sharing their passion for manifestation, Tarot, horoscopes, and crystal healing, amongst others.





## Training programmes

Whilst it's fantastic that we, as a society and as an agency, are increasingly having the difficult conversations; many feel it can be a minefield and engaging in these discussions can be daunting. To help, we partnered with Inclusive Employers to run a session on how to have 'Courageous Conversations'.

The goal was to provide our employees with a practical toolkit, helping them feel comfortable dealing with difficult conversations both professionally and personally. This covered how to call people in, rather than out, as well as challenging difficult behaviour and exclusion in the workplace.

Our long-term partnership continued with Vanessa Belleau, an Inclusion & Belonging Strategy Expert & Educator – involving various training sessions including a session with our senior leaders on how to build an inclusive, high-performing culture. Her workshop equipped our team with the knowledge, skills, and tools to create and nurture teams. She provided them with an action plan to embrace, empower, enable and embed an inclusive culture at the core of a team.

Vanessa reminded attendees of the five stages of Belonging and how it correlates to improved performance, **fostering psychological safety and trust within teams to unlock more creativity, cultivating respectful and effective communication.**

Alongside our external trainers, we also employed the skills learnt from our Courageous Conversations training to take part in two Race, Religion and Belief focused Open Conversations Forums.

The first was a discussion on the impact of celebrity culture fuelling extremist sentiment, following Kanye West's antisemitic outbursts earlier this year. Secondly, in line with our widened focus on belief we encouraged employees to share what they believe in, what they turn to when in need of inspiration and where they find meaning.



**Vanessa Bailey,  
Inclusion &  
Belonging Strategy  
Expert & Educator**



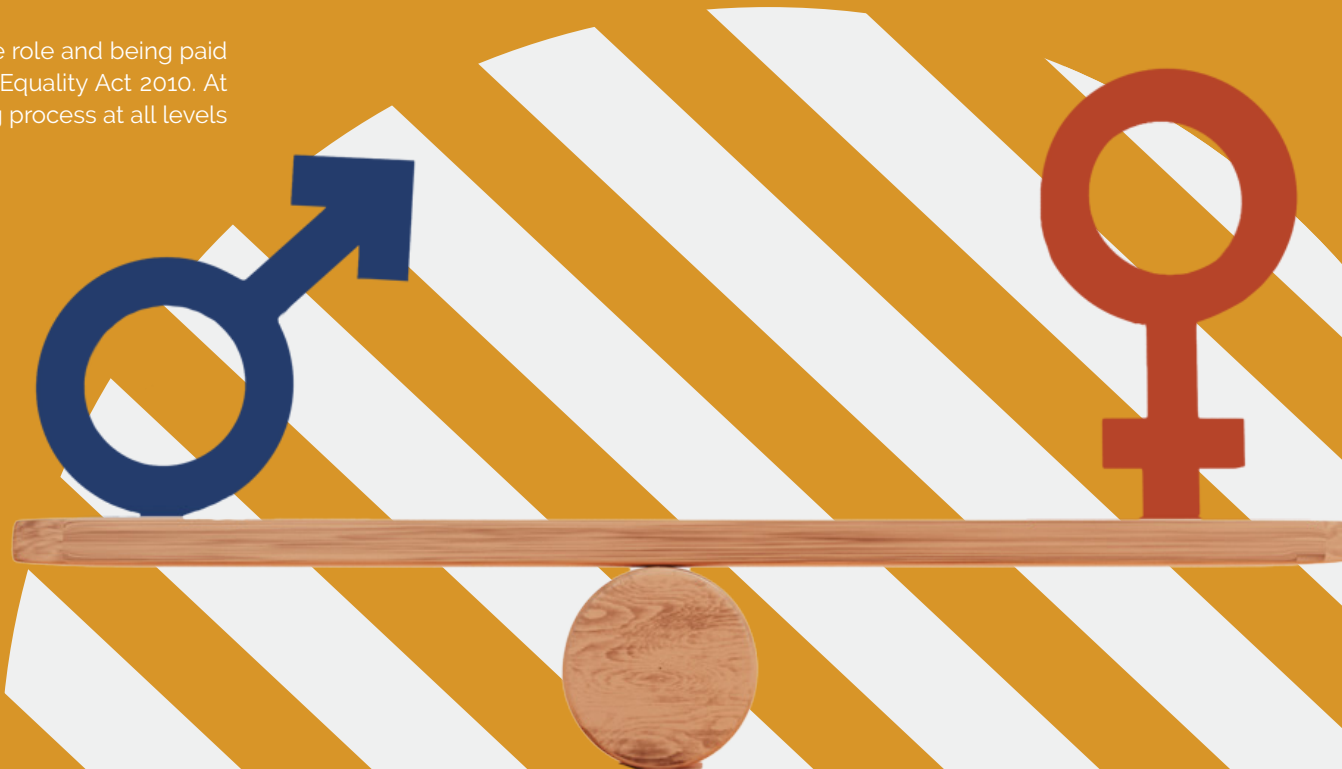
# GENDER & ETHNICITY PAY GAP

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 on the following page.**



# GENDER PAY GAP

## The Gender Pay Gap explained

The gender pay gap ("GPG") shows the difference between the average (mean or median) earnings of men and women across a work force. The calculations are based on payroll data drawn from a specific date each year, which for us, is 1 September.

### The Mean GPG

The mean GPG has been calculated by adding together firstly the salaries of the women, and dividing the total by the number of women in the agency. This calculation is repeated for men. The difference between these two figures is then divided by the mean salary for men and multiplied by 100 to provide a percentage.

### The Median GPG

The median GPG is calculated by sorting the salaries of women in the agency from highest to lowest, and then finding the middle salary – that is the salary that's in the exact middle, with 50% of the women earning more and 50% earning less than that figure. The same is completed for the salaries for the men. The difference between these two figures is then divided by the median salary for men and multiplied by 100 to provide a percentage.

## The PHA Gender Pay Gap

Our mean GPG as of 1 September 2023 is 6.56%, and the median GPG is 5.48%. This is a small increase on the GPG we reported for 1 September 2022 (4.58% mean and 4.29% median).

### Our workforce

Our workforce demographics have shifted this year, with 66% of our workforce identifying as women (an increase of just over 6%), and 68% of our new hires this year identifying as women. Of the roles that we hired for, 68% were junior positions. This means that this year, we have a higher proportion of women in junior positions compared to last year, which has resulted in the increased pay gap. As the GPG shows the difference between the average (mean or median) earnings of men and women across a work force, the higher the proportion of women in junior roles, the higher the GPG will be. Our workforce will continue to evolve and as our junior employees progress into more senior roles and their salaries increase we will see the GPG change.

PR Week has reported an average gender pay gap of 15% for the PR industry this year.

## PHA Gender pay gap:

Mean:

**6.56%**

Median:

**5.48%**

**PR industry average  
Gender pay gap: 15%**

Reference: PRCA Communications Census

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 Ethnicity pay gap:

Mean:

9.42%

Median:

10.81%

PR industry average  
ethnicity pay gap: 16%

Reference: PRCA Communications Census

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.

# ETHNICITY PAY GAP

## The Gender Pay Gap explained

The ethnicity pay gap ("EPG") is the difference between the average (mean or median) earnings of white and ethnically diverse employees. The calculations are based on payroll data drawn from a specific date each year, which for us, is 1 September.

## The Mean GPG

The mean EPG has been calculated by adding together firstly the salaries of ethnically diverse employees, and dividing the total by the number of ethnically diverse employees in the agency. This calculation is repeated for white employees. The difference between these two figures is then divided by the mean salary for white employees and multiplied by 100 to provide a percentage.

## The Median GPG

The median EPG is calculated by sorting the salaries of ethnically diverse employees in the agency from highest to lowest, and then finding the middle salary – that is the salary that's in the exact middle, with 50% of the ethnically diverse employees women earning more and 50% earning less than that figure. The same is completed for the salaries for white employees. The difference between these two figures is then divided by the median salary for white employees and multiplied by 100 to provide a percentage.

## The PHA Ethnicity Pay Gap

Our mean EPG as of 1 September 2023 is 9.42% and the median EPG is 10.81%. This is an increase in the EPG we reported for 1 September 2022 (5.29% mean and 1.49% median).

## Our workforce

40% of our hires in the last 12 months identify as being ethnically diverse, which is consistent with recruitment statistics in the last couple of years. In the last 12 months, 40% of our hires identified as being ethnically diverse and the majority of the new hires we have made this year who identify as ethnically diverse have been for more junior positions. As the EPG shows the difference between the average (mean or median) earnings of ethnically diverse and white employees across a workforce, the higher the proportion of ethnically diverse employees in junior roles, the higher the EPG will be. Our workforce will continue to evolve and as our junior employees progress into more senior roles and their salaries increase we will see the gap reduce.



# GENDER & SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Gender identity and sexual orientation forms a key part of our strategy to improve equality, diversity and belonging within PHA. We are committed to creating an environment where the sexual orientation and gender identity of all colleagues, clients and partners is respected, and where all are afforded dignity and equal rights.

At PHA 11% of our workforce identify as being a part of the LGBTQ+ community. Across the agency 66% of employees identify as female and 34% identify as male .

In the last year we have focused on educating colleagues about the challenges facing women, trans, and LGBTQ+ communities. Our focus has continued to look at encouraging productive conversations about gender identity and sexual orientation, and to ensure our colleagues are equipped with the knowledge to form their own opinions on issues related to gender and sexual orientation, whilst remaining respectful.

This year we have enhanced our training programme, focussing on areas that support us in our work, but that also help us to create a workplace that champions equality for all protected characteristic groups. Reengaging charity partner Mind Out has been key to improving LGBTQ+ awareness within the business and supporting colleagues.

We have hosted various 'Open Conversations' forums, including discussions about trans rights, the Glastonbury line-up gender row, Paul O'Grady's contribution to feminism and gay rights, and perceived 'Wokeism'. During these conversations, we provide a safe space for people to air their views and discuss openly with colleagues. Some of these conversations can be challenging, but they're vital to creating a more harmonious, educated and respectful workplace culture.



Working with MindOut, a mental health charity supporting the LGBTQ+ community, we have conducted training to provide our employees with educational and thought-provoking seminars. This includes a session run by trainer Kip Erve, who shared insights as a member of the trans community in the Trans 201 presentation. In the session they discussed discourse around contemporary transphobia and what this looks like in a modern-day context. We also looked at the state of trans healthcare in the UK and the impact the law and criminal justice system has on the trans community.

Last year our employees told us they valued trainers with lived experiences, like Kip, who led a thought-provoking discussion on contemporary trans issues. This is a continued focus for us going forwards.

Finally, we hosted Bystander Training, educating people on how to be a positive bystander if you ever see someone being abused in public or online.

The trainer shared some really helpful tips on how to navigate these scenarios and offer support to people who are being harassed. Employees were told that this can be done by intervening when you witness harassment by calmly addressing the situation and supporting the victim, offering to help the victim whilst maintaining privacy and dignity and ensuring to report the incident.



“



**Sherin Malick,  
SEO Account Director**

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink.

I found the MindOut session really useful and felt like I learnt a lot. It was so interesting to hear from someone first hand and to understand the issues trans people face. I was definitely shocked to learn about some of the policies that make transitioning hard so it was really useful to understand the process and what people go through. This session has made me understand trans rights in a new light and I will be a lot of more conscious about what transpeople go through on a daily basis.

“



**David Condon,  
Senior Account Executive**

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink.

I wanted to express my sincere appreciation for the insightful Equality, Diversity & Inclusion session with Mind Out. It was an eye-opening experience that shed light on the unique challenges faced by the transgender community in the UK. The session not only increased my awareness but also fostered a deeper sense of empathy and understanding. I believe that such initiatives are essential in promoting a more inclusive and supportive workplace. Kudos to PHA for organizing this, and I look forward to more opportunities like these in the future. Thank you for encouraging a culture of diversity and acceptance.



## Harry Cox, Account Manager



### Moving Open Conversations forward

Our Open Conversations Forum has always been a crown jewel in our strategy. This year though, we wanted to put a clear message at the heart of our forums: it is okay to have differing opinions, and in fact, that is the epitome of diversity.

Learning from your colleagues and being in a safe space to untangle contentious issues can often be the best way to enact cultural change. This is why this year our forums have consisted of lively discussions on a trending ED&I debate. Crucially, with no external trainer.

Third party educational training is essential, but so too is fostering a community environment where employees can voice their true opinions and learn from each other's lived experience. This allows your ED&I culture to be created bottom up, not preached from top down.

It is fair to say we don't shy away from having the big conversations either. Over the last year we have traversed terrain such as the debate on the Scottish Gender Recognition Reform Bill, the effect of colonialism on black British culture and comedy's privilege to push societal boundaries.

Despite the challenging nature of these conversations, we have risen to that challenge as an agency. When anonymously surveyed, 100% of staff responded to say they were comfortable sharing their views in the environment created, and again 100% found the topics engaging. One anonymous respondent exclaimed,

**"I love how Open Conversations is both informative and personable. It's clear that the team has made many efforts to create an inclusive environment whereby people feel comfortable and happy to share their personal anecdotes and experiences in relation to the month's chosen topic. It's also a great way to step away from emails for a short while and helps keep my mind engaged!"**

The reality of our world is that there is no one set ED&I pill to swallow that will enlighten us to the chosen way of thinking. We are all unique and have individual opinions. That is to be embraced, not shut down, and our Open Conversations Forum certainly does that.





## Pride

PHA is fully committed to supporting LGBTQ+ employees and the wider community year-round and Pride Month offers us a significant platform to amplify our efforts. This Pride, our aim was to host informative, and enjoyable events and create a safe space for all employees to celebrate the LGBTQ+ community. To kickstart the month, we organised a Pride themed Open Conversation forum, on LGBTQ+ role models and pressing media topics such as LGBTQ+ casting in television and film.



We created a Pride playlist for our offices and asked employees to recommend songs from LGBTQ+ artists and well-known anthems that represent the community.

Jack Doyle of MindOut delivered an informative session on LGBTQ+ representation in the media, sparking lively discussions around inclusion and language and helping to inform how we could better support our clients looking to mark the calendar moment. The key takeaways from the session were that LGBTQ+ representation in the media is increasing year on year, but that there needs to be a concerted effort to ensure that this representation is accurate and not reliant on harmful stereotypes that are detrimental to the community.

**“I REALLY ENJOYED THE MINDOUT TRANS 201 SESSION. IT WAS INSIGHTFUL AND I LEARNED A LOT FROM THIS SESSION. I FEEL LIKE I AM A BETTER ALLY NOW. I WOULD DEFINITELY ATTEND OTHER SESSIONS LIKE THIS ONE IF PHA WAS TO PLAN MORE.”**



**“IN PROVIDING THESE TYPES OF TRAINING SESSIONS, PHA SHOWS ITS VALUES OF INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY, THAT THE WORKPLACE CAN BE MORE THAN A JOB BUT ALSO A PLACE TO LEARN AND EVOLVE AS A HUMAN.”**

To conclude Pride Month, we welcomed back the ever-entertaining drag artist, Crayola, who hosted a fun-filled drag bingo event to celebrate the LGBTQ+ community at PHA with music, dancing, games, an impressive employee lip-sync battle, and a sprinkle of LGBTQ+ history and education. It was heartwarming to witness employees shedding inhibitions and embracing the spirit of fun, which epitomizes the essence of Pride and celebrating the LGBTQ+ community at PHA.

Pride Month consistently offers a valuable opportunity to shine a spotlight on the LGBTQ+ community and ignite initiatives that are continued throughout the year, including our extensive training programme, media reviews and partnerships.

This then ignited initiatives that are continued throughout the year, including our extensive training programme, media reviews and partnerships.



## PARENT & CAREGIVERS

19% of our workforce is made up of parents and/or caregivers and this has remained an important focus within our ED&I strategy. Both Group Managing Directors are parents, as are 59% of our SLT so family is a priority and the heart of our values as an agency.

We frequently review our parental and caregiving policies to highlight our commitment and support to our employees during important milestones in their lives.

### Maternity & Paternity

We offer six months of full paid maternity leave and six weeks of full paid paternity leave. We match our maternity and paternity leave policies for the adoption of children up to age of one. For children adopted over one, we offer 12 weeks of full paid adoption leave.

We offer a phased return to work using accrued holiday. Employees can also work or attend training for up to 10 days during leave, using paid KIT days. We have a 100% return rate from parental leave.







## Hybrid & flexible working

At PHA we have adopted a hybrid way of working allowing employees the flexibility to choose to work from either one of our four offices, or to work from home. Our Hybrid Working Charter requires staff to work from an office eight days each month and to choose a location that works best for them the remainder. We have daily flexible start/finish times, starting at 8- 9am and finishing at 5- 6pm. Every Friday we finish at 4pm. We also have a formal Flexible Working Policy with 7% of employees having formal arrangements in place.

To date 100% of flexible working requests have been granted.

**David Schulhof,**  
**Director of Digital**



As a father of two (8 and 6), hybrid working has made work/life balance so much easier. I am lucky that when I was 5 days a week in the office, my kids were young and not at school but I still felt like I was missing so much of their development, missing bath times or afterschool shows and activities. Being at home typically 3-days of the working week just means I can attend school events and meetings, do drop off and pick ups but also removing that commute time means I can turn off my laptop and immediately be with the family.

The commute time is the forgotten element that office working takes away and eats into the morning and evening routines and time with the family. It also means I can do my share around the house and with the kids and have a good balance between me and my wife Gemma. Family aside, being at home means I can get to the gym (which I love) easily, take the dog for a walk at lunch and just get out and about more, which has been great for my own mental health.





### Fertility treatment

We support our male and female employees who are at the start of their family planning with our Fertility treatment policy. Our fertility policy allows employees who undergo fertility treatment and procedures up to a maximum 10 days of paid leave per calendar year, whilst eligible partners are entitled to take paid time off to accompany the individual who is undergoing fertility treatment.



### Breast feeding

We acknowledge that employees may want to continue with the routines they have established during their maternity leave and have clarity on the process when they return to work.

We support any employee who intends to continue to breastfeed or express milk at work after their return from parental leave granting additional breaks if needed, providing them with a private place in the office and a locker to store all equipment.



**Holly McNally,**  
**Senior Account Manager**



Expecting a baby is an exciting time but it can also be stressful. PHA was fantastic throughout and I felt so well supported. The business was really accommodating to any needs I may have and made sure I knew what adjustments and flexibility was available should I need it, either in the moment or as my pregnancy progressed. I was able to have open conversations with my managers and HR with complete confidence and everything was handled with empathy and respect.

The options available for how I took my maternity leave were made clear and I was always positively supported in how I planned to take leave. It meant taking time for appointments and the lead up to maternity leave was one less stress to worry about.



# 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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