

Head of People and Culture

London or Brussels

Job Description

Job Purpose

The Head of People and Culture is responsible for implementing the strategic and operational delivery of ClientEarth's global People and Culture (P&C) function, ensuring it enables impact in a complex, international NGO context.

Working as a trusted adviser to Directors and Heads, the post-holder partners closely with senior leaders to shape workforce strategy, organisational development, and People-related decision-making, aligning People priorities with ClientEarth's mission: using the power of the law to bring about systemic change that protects all life on Earth.

The role operates within a collaborative and highly experienced P&C leadership team, and holds clear accountability for the overall leadership, coordination, and performance of the function. The post-holder deputises for the Chief Strategy and People Officer, contributing to organisational development, change management, strategic initiatives.

Context and External Environment

ClientEarth operates in a dynamic global environment requiring sophisticated, values-driven People leadership. The post-holder will ensure the organisation is equipped to respond to:

- Increasing complexity of multi-country employment law and regulatory environments
- Evolving expectations around equity, diversity, and inclusion, including decolonisation and more equitable global representation and decision making
- Competing for talent within the international NGO, legal, and policy sectors
- Increasing focus on responsible funding, cost control, and pay transparency
- Growing distributed and hybrid global workforces
- Rapidly developing people analytics, AI, and digital HR solutions
- Increasing scrutiny on organisational culture, ethics, safeguarding, and staff wellbeing

The role ensures ClientEarth's People approach remains externally informed, future-focused and aligned with best practice across the international NGO and professional services sectors.

Working Relationships

- Reports to the Chief Strategy and People Officer (based in London)

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- Works as part of a close, non-hierarchical, leadership group with People & Culture Business Partners
- Responsible for approximately 15 colleagues and directly line manages the People & Culture Business Partners and the Recruitment Lead
- Works alongside the People & Culture Business Partners to collaborate directly with Directors, Heads, and national entity management
- Provides their expertise early in any organisational, regional, or national planning, policy, or change processes that impact People
- Collaborates closely with other teams and key stakeholders in Business Services and External Affairs (comprising Communications and Development).
- Represents ClientEarth externally in HR, reward, EDI, and organisational development networks, and forums

Key Responsibilities

Strategic Leadership and Advisory

- Set and lead the strategic direction of the global P&C function
- Act as a trusted adviser to the Global Leadership Team and, with the People Business Partners, other senior leaders, providing expert guidance on People-related organisational design implications, workforce planning, leadership effectiveness, and change
- Ensure the effective delivery of organisation-wide People strategy aligned to ClientEarth's mission, growth plans, and external context through senior leadership decision-making, prioritisation, and implementation planning
- Provide expert HR insight and challenge to senior leaders on People-related risks, trends, and changes to employment/labour laws.
- Exercise delegated authority and provide recommendations on key People decisions, including employee relations escalations, organisational design, reward frameworks, and workforce planning

Collective P&C Leadership

- Work in close partnership with P&C Business Partners as a collaborative, non-hierarchical team, ensuring consistency of approach and shared ownership of outcomes
- Provide functional leadership and coordination across the People team, ensuring high standards, alignment and delivery while retaining clear accountability for the overall effectiveness and performance of the global People function
- Build capability across the People function to operate as strategic partners rather than transactional support, and oversee workforce development, resources, planning and workload within the People & Culture team

People-Related Organisational Development and Change

- Lead any People-related organisational development initiatives to support growth, international expansion, and evolving organisational models

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- Support the design and delivery of major People-related change programmes, ensuring strong engagement, communication, and implementation
- Shape organisational culture and employee engagement initiatives to support performance, inclusion, and wellbeing

Employee Relations and People Risk

- Manage the working relationships and negotiations with trade unions and other employee representative bodies
- Provide senior oversight and guidance and training on complex employee-relations matters, ensuring consistency, fairness, and compliance
- Oversee the organisation's approach to People risk, including identifying trends and advising on mitigation strategies
- Ensure alignment with applicable employment law and best practices across jurisdictions

Reward, Workforce Planning, and Talent

- Provide strategic oversight of reward, job architecture, and pay frameworks, ensuring fairness, transparency, and market alignment
- Contribute to effective workforce planning and resource allocation across departments/national entities
- Ensure talent and performance approaches support organisational priorities and sustainability

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Wellbeing

- Contribute to the development and leadership of ClientEarth's EDI and Decolonisation strategy, ensuring alignment with global best practice and organisational values and measurable progress in systems, decision-making, and leadership practice
- Support all people managers to deliver measurable progress on equity, inclusion, and representation, contributing to improved equity outcomes, relevant EDI standards or accreditations, and an inclusive culture across all countries
- Ensure organisational approaches to wellbeing and safeguarding are robust and proportionate to risk

People Data, Insight, and Reporting

- Work with the HR systems and Reporting Manager to ensure the organisation has access to high-quality People data and insight
- Use data and analytics to inform decision making, identify trends, and support organisational effectiveness
- Oversee the production of strategic reports to senior leadership and governance boards, and management bodies
- Ensure ClientEarth takes a strategic, ethical, and proportionate approach to People-related data, analytics, AI-enabled tools, and emerging HR technologies, balancing innovation and effectiveness

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with appropriate governance, legal compliance, and organisational values, with legal advice and support from ClientEarth's in-house Data Privacy Specialist Lawyer.

External Engagement and Sector Leadership

- Represent ClientEarth (alongside other senior P&C staff) in relevant People or HR-related external networks, benchmarking groups, and sector forums
- Monitor People-related developments in the international NGO and professional services sectors, bringing external insight into internal decision making
- Ensure ClientEarth remains aligned with emerging best practice in People-related management, reward, and organisational development
- Develop and maintain strong external networks, contributing to sector thinking and positioning ClientEarth as a credible voice on People, EDI, and organisational effectiveness

Financial and Governance Responsibilities

- Contribute to People budget planning and oversight, ensuring effective use of resources
- Ensure strong processes, procedures, compliance, and financial accountability within the P&C function
- Provide senior-level assurance on People-related risks and controls

Location

This role can be based in ClientEarth's London or Brussels offices and will involve travel within Europe and occasionally globally, in line with organisational needs and in compliance with our travel and environmental policies.

Person specification

Education and training

- MCIPD-qualified HR professional, or equivalent senior-level experience in HR, organisational development, employee relations, or employment law (essential)
- Evidence of ongoing professional development (essential), including active involvement in relevant HR, people, organisational development, or sector networks (desirable)

Experience and knowledge

- Extensive experience leading or shaping a global People / HR function in a complex organisation and operating as a trusted adviser to senior leaders (essential)

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- Significant experience across employee relations, organisational development, reward, workforce planning, engagement, and change in complex, multi-country organisations (essential)
- Knowledge and understanding of human resources systems, processes, and procedures (essential)
- Experience working and negotiating with trade unions and other employee representative bodies (essential)
- Strong understanding of international employment contexts and regulatory environments, including statutory frameworks in countries where ClientEarth operates (desirable), or a willingness to develop this knowledge (essential)
- Experience leading People-related organisational change projects in multi-country and matrixed organisations (essential)
- Strong understanding of, and commitment to, equality, diversity, inclusion, and decolonisation, with experience embedding these principles into HR and organisational policies, practices, and performance measures (essential)
- Strong external awareness of trends across international NGOs, legal, or mission-driven sectors, including People analytics, AI, and workforce digitisation (essential)

Key Competencies

- Fluent ([CEFR C2](#)) in English (essential)
- Fluent ([CEFR C2](#)) in another relevant European language (i.e., French, German, Polish or Spanish) (desirable)
- Proactive strategic thinker, able to set a motivating vision for the People team, address ClientEarth's priorities, and translate external trends into organisational action (essential)
- Strong influencing skills, with the ability to challenge constructively, support senior leaders, and operate as a trusted adviser (essential)
- Excellent interpersonal and relationship-building skills, with sound judgement in managing complex and sensitive people issues (essential)
- Ability to operate effectively in a collaborative, non-hierarchical, leadership model and within a multicultural setting (essential)
- Proactive and creative problem solver, able to respond positively to the challenges of a growing global organisation and develop solutions that meet both organisational and people needs (essential)
- Strong alignment with ClientEarth's values, vision, mission, and EDI strategy objectives (essential)
- Strong digital confidence (essential), including familiarity with HR information systems, People analytics, and the ethical use of AI-enabled tools (desirable)