

Cheshire Academies Trust

Be part of our Tribe



People Director

Recruitment Pack
September 2026



Cheshire Academies Trust
Inspiring hearts and minds

Be around the light bringers,
the magic makers, the world shifters.
They challenge you, break you open
uplift and expand you.
They don't let you play small with your life.
These heartbeats are your people.
These people are your
tribe.

Be part of our Tribe.



Welcome from the CEO

On behalf of Cheshire Academies Trust, I am pleased to welcome your interest in the role of People Director.

Cheshire Academies Trust is a growing Multi-Academy Trust of thirteen primary and special schools, with experienced and ambitious leaders across all of our settings. Our schools serve communities across Cheshire, Wirral, and Liverpool, and our collective purpose is clear: when the adults around children are skilled, well-supported and genuinely motivated, children thrive.

Our vision, 'Inspiring Hearts and Minds', runs through everything we do. We hold ourselves to account through the outcomes of our most disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. It's their progress that tells us whether we're getting it right. People are at the centre of how we operate as a Trust. We invest in our staff because we know that workforce quality is the single greatest lever we have for improving children's lives.

This is a new role for our Trust and one we have created deliberately. We have reached a point in our growth where the people function needs senior, dedicated professional leadership. The People Director will be the Trust's expert voice on workforce matters, working at a senior level across the central team to build the HR infrastructure, data capability, and employment practice that our schools and our ambitions require.

You will work under the direction of the Chief Finance and Operations Officer (CFOO), engaging closely with Executive Team colleagues and our Headteachers and you will have direct access to the Board on matters of employment risk and governance. This is a role for someone who can operate strategically and hands-on in equal measure, someone who takes genuine satisfaction in building something properly.

You'll be an experienced HR professional, ideally CIPD qualified to Level 7, with a track record of operating at a senior level in a complex, multi-site organisation. Experience in an education or public sector setting is advantageous, but what matters most is that you understand the realities of managing employment matters across a dispersed workforce with varied terms and conditions.

You'll be confident across the full range of HR practice: employee relations, recruitment, workforce planning, policy development, pay and reward, and absence management. You'll have personally managed complex casework, including disciplinary, grievance and capability, and you'll know when to advise, when to act and when to bring in specialist support.

You'll be comfortable working without a team beneath you in the early stages of this role. That means being equally at ease writing a policy, advising a Headteacher on a sensitive

staffing matter, and presenting workforce data to the Board. The ability to move between strategic and operational without losing quality at either end is genuinely essential here.

Thank you for considering a career with Cheshire Academies Trust. If you would like to discuss the role or arrange an informal conversation, please contact our CFOO, Luci Jones, at lucijones@cheshireacademiestrust.co.uk

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steve Ellis', with a stylized, flowing script.

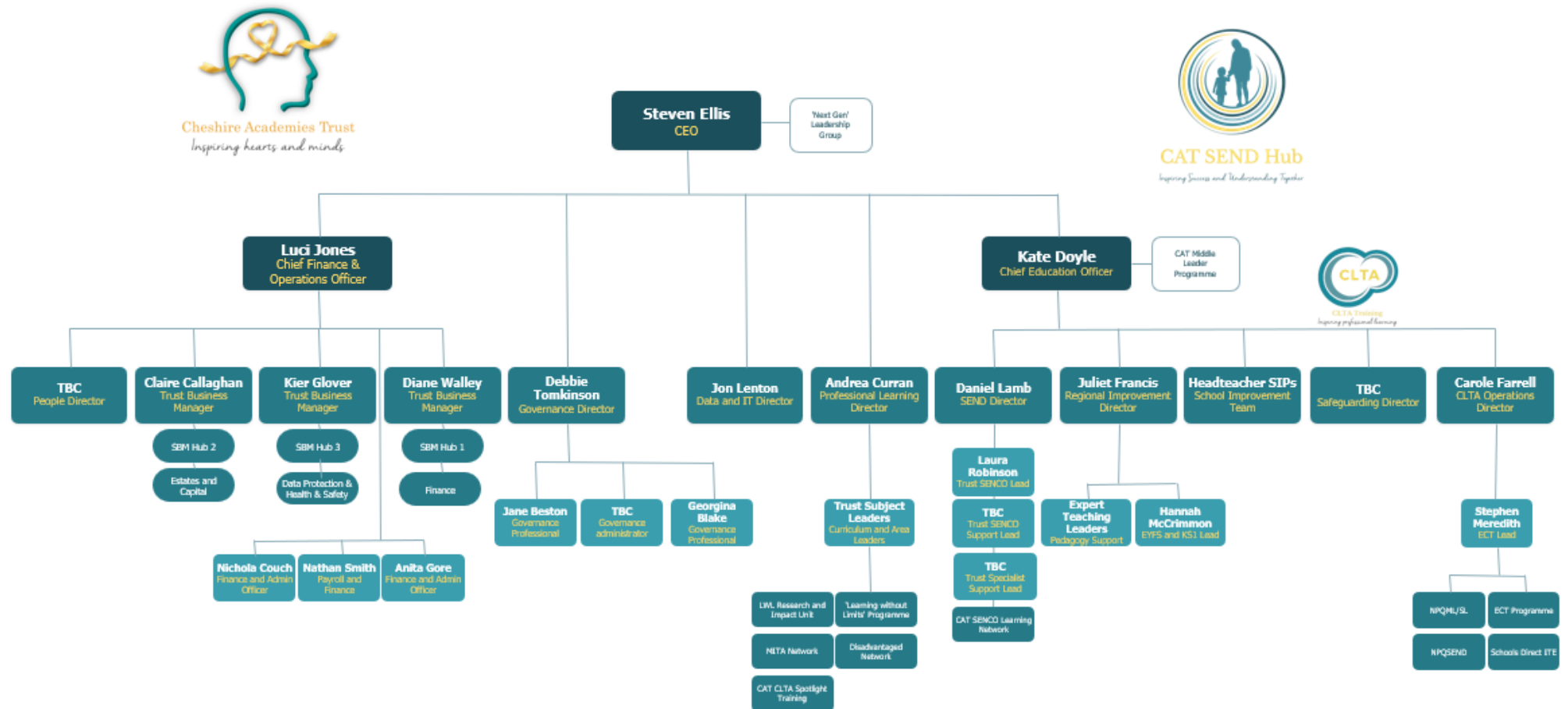
Steve Ellis
CEO



Our Schools and Teaching School (CLTA):



Central Team Structure:





People Director Vacancy

The Opportunity

Reporting to the CFOO, you will be the Trust's lead adviser on all people matters, leading our transition from outsourced HR Business Partner to internal end-to-end People function. You will work directly with Headteachers, SBMs and central team colleagues. This is a hybrid role, with regular planned visits to schools across Cheshire, Wirral and Liverpool and flexibility to work from home or the central office otherwise.

What You'll Do

The scope of this role covers the full employment lifecycle across a workforce of teaching and support staff in our schools.

In the early months, your priority will be understanding how HR currently operates at school level, establishing your relationships with key colleagues and building the foundations for consistent, trust-wide people practice. Over time, you'll develop the function into something that genuinely supports both the Trust's strategic direction and the day-to-day needs of our schools.

Your responsibilities will include:

- Serving as the Trust's primary HR adviser, providing guidance to all senior leaders on all employment matters, including complex casework, disciplinary, grievance, capability and absence management.
- Developing and maintaining the Trust's HR policy framework, ensuring policies are legally compliant, practically useful and consistently applied across all schools. Policies operate under the STPCD for teaching staff and NJC Green Book / Burgundy Book for support staff, and you'll be expected to keep the Trust current with changes to both.
- Leading on workforce planning and recruitment strategy, including supporting with senior appointments and ensuring safer recruitment compliance across all schools in line with KCSIE and the Trust's Safeguarding and Recruitment and Selection Policy.
- Managing the Trust's relationship with its occupational health supplier and taking responsibility for the effective use of Civica as the HR information system.
- Supporting and quality-assuring the Trust's appraisal and pay processes, ensuring consistency across schools and alignment with the STPCD and the Trust's Pay Policy.
- Expanding and enhancing Trust-wide approaches to staff wellbeing, equality and diversity, and professional development, working alongside the Chief Education Officer where workforce development intersects with school improvement.
- Preparing and presenting workforce data and people reporting to the CFOO and Executive Team, including contributing to the Workforce Strategy and delivering the Workforce SQM.
- Supporting the Trust's growth, leading on TUPE and employment due diligence when new schools join the Trust.

What You'll Bring

- You'll be an experienced HR professional, ideally CIPD qualified to Level 7, with a track record of operating at senior level in a complex, multi-site organisation. Experience in an education or public sector setting is an advantage, though what matters most is whether you can hit the ground running in an environment where the employment frameworks are specific.
- You'll have personally managed complex casework from start to finish. You'll know employment law well enough to advise confidently without referring everything to a solicitor, and you'll also know when specialist legal support is genuinely needed.
- Familiarity with the STPCD, the NJC Green Book and the Teacher and Local Government Pension Schemes would be an advantage.
- You're equally comfortable working at a strategic level and dealing with a Headteacher's urgent query on a Monday morning.
- CIPD Level 7 or equivalent experience is our preference. Degree-level education is expected. This is a 22.2 hours per week, 39 weeks per year role. We actively support flexible working and will welcome applications from suitably qualified candidates who wish to job share or work on a part time or term time only basis.
- Please state clearly in your application if you are seeking a flexible or alternative working pattern. Our usual central team hours are 9:00–17:00, Monday to Friday, but you will be expected to work flexibly to meet the needs of the Trust. For example, the majority of our Board meetings take place in the evening, so you would adjust your hours if required to attend.

We offer:

- Permanent contract (after 6-month probation)
- Annual pay increases on a national scale
- 26 days' annual leave + bank holidays (rising to 31 days after 5 years)
- Funded, personalised training plan
- Local Government Pension Scheme membership
- Annual flu jab
- Salary sacrifice schemes (Cycle to Work, White Goods)

We are proud of our collaborative, values-led culture and you will join a central team that works closely with schools, is approachable and supportive, and is committed to staff wellbeing as well as pupil outcomes.

Application Process:

Please submit your application via the View My New Term website. The closing date is Monday 28th September at 9am. The date for interviews will be Thursday 1st October.

Cheshire Academies Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. Appointments will be subject to an enhanced DBS check and satisfactory references.

Job Description



Cheshire Academies Trust
Inspiring hearts and minds

Strategic People Leadership

Serve as the Executive Team's lead professional on all workforce matters, including organisational design, workforce planning and succession. Produce people reporting, risk briefings and business cases for the Senior Executive Team, Finance and Resources Committee and Board of Trustees. Represent the Trust externally with the DfE, trade unions, local authorities and sector networks.

Building the People Function

Design and implement the Trust's centralised people operating model, defining what's delivered centrally, what remains within academies and the service standards that apply to both. Build an internal advice service that reduces reliance on external HR consultancy over time, and develop the Trust's suite of employment policies, procedures and template documentation.

Trust Growth and School Onboarding

Lead all people-related aspects of Trust growth. That means due diligence on prospective schools, quantifying workforce liabilities and risks; end-to-end TUPE management; and owning the Trust's onboarding framework for new academies, covering employment arrangements, Civica migration, payroll transition and policy induction.

Employee Relations and Casework

Act as the Trust's senior professional on complex and sensitive employee relations matters, including disciplinary, grievance, capability, long-term sickness and safeguarding-related casework. Advise Headteachers directly on high-risk cases, manage the Trust's engagement in ACAS conciliation and employment tribunal proceedings and maintain effective working relationships with recognised trade unions.

Recruitment and Safer Recruitment

Lead the Trust's recruitment and resourcing strategy, including employer branding, candidate attraction and pipeline development. Provide professional oversight of safer recruitment compliance across all schools, ensuring the quality of pre-employment checks, SCR compliance and alignment with KCSIE. Lead on succession planning and leadership pipeline development Trust-wide.

Pay, Reward and Pensions

Lead pay review and pay award implementation across teaching and support staff, ensuring alignment with the STPCD, NJC and Trust Pay Policy. Act as the senior lead on the relationship with the outsourced payroll provider, and maintain effective employer relationships with Teachers' Pensions, Cheshire Pension Fund and Merseyside Pension Fund. Advise the CEO, CFOO and Remuneration Committee on reward matters.

Data, Systems and Compliance

Establish the Trust's workforce data and KPI framework and lead the optimisation of Civica as the HR system of record. Produce a monthly People dashboard for the Senior Executive Team and a termly report to the Finance and Resources Committee. Own the Trust's people-related risk register entries and ensure the Trust meets all statutory obligations under the Academy Trust Handbook, KCSIE, employment law and data protection legislation.

Absence, Occupational Health and Wellbeing

Lead the Trust's approach to absence management and manage the relationship with the occupational health provider. Advise on long-term sickness, phased returns, reasonable adjustments and ill-health retirement. Lead the Trust's colleague wellbeing offer, including the Employee Assistance Programme.

Building Capability in Schools

Design and deliver HR training and coaching to Headteachers and senior leaders, building their confidence and consistency in people management. Oversee the Trust's approach to appraisal and performance management for support staff, and ensure all colleagues with people management responsibilities are appropriately trained and up to date.

Salary:

Grade 11. NJC Pay Scale SCP 35-40 FTE £46,142 - £51,356.

0.6 FTE Actual salary £23,887 - £27,188

Job Title: People Director

Location: Hybrid (work from Home/Wirral/Cheshire/Liverpool)

Reports to: CFOO

Key: E = Essential D = Desirable A = Application I = Interview R = References C = Certificate

#	Criterion	E/D	Evidence
Qualifications			
1	CIPD qualified to Level 7 (Advanced Diploma / Chartered Member) or equivalent experience demonstrably at that level	E	A/I/C
2	Chartered Member or Chartered Fellow of the CIPD (MCIPD / FCIPD)	D	A/C
3	Educated to degree level or equivalent relevant knowledge and experience	E	A/I/C
4	Safer Recruitment training (or willingness to complete on appointment)	E	A/C
5	Evidence of sustained continuing professional development in HR or people management	E	A/I
Knowledge & Experience			
6	Significant senior HR leadership experience, including demonstrable experience at Head of HR, Director of People or equivalent level	E	A/I/R
7	Experience of leading or significantly contributing to the centralisation, transformation or redesign of an HR or people function	E	A/I/R
8	Experience within a multi-academy trust, wider education sector, public sector or similarly complex multi-site organisation	E	A/I/R
9	Strong, current knowledge of employment law, STPCD, NJC Green Book, Burgundy Book, TUPE and relevant sector frameworks	E	A/I
10	Experience of leading or directly overseeing complex employee relations casework, including tribunal preparation and ACAS conciliation	E	A/I/R
11	Experience of managing an outsourced payroll relationship and working with Teachers' Pensions and LGPS (including the Cheshire and/or Merseyside Pension Funds)	E	A/I/R
12	Experience of implementing and optimising an HR information system; experience of Civica specifically	E/D	A/I
13	Experience of designing and delivering a workforce data, reporting and KPI framework	E	A/I
14	Experience of leading people due diligence on school conversions, acquisitions or schools joining a multi-academy trust	D	A/I/R
15	Experience of TUPE transfers, harmonisation of terms and conditions, and post-transfer people integration	E	A/I/R
16	Experience of working with recognised trade unions, including consultation and collective negotiation	E	A/I
17	Expert working knowledge of safer recruitment, pre-employment checks, KCSIE and the Single Central Record	E	A/I
18	Knowledge of the employment-related elements of the Academy Trust Handbook	E	A/I
19	Understanding of UK GDPR as it applies to people data and HR record-keeping	E	A/I
20	Experience of designing and delivering HR training to leaders and managers	E	A/I
21	Experience of building scalable people processes in a growing organisation	D	A/I
Skills & Abilities			
22	Ability to translate workforce data into clear, actionable insight for non-HR audiences including Trustees, Headteachers and the Executive Team	E	A/I
23	Strong analytical and numerical skills, with a demonstrably data-driven approach to decision-making	E	A/I

#	Criterion	E/D	Evidence
24	Excellent written communication skills, including the ability to produce high-quality reports, policies, business cases and Board papers	E	A/I
25	Excellent interpersonal, influencing and stakeholder management skills, including at Board and Executive level	E	A/I/R
26	Ability to handle highly sensitive and confidential matters with discretion, sound judgement and emotional intelligence	E	A/I/R
27	Strong process-improvement mindset, able to identify inefficiencies and deliver measurable improvement	E	A/I
28	Ability to coach, develop and lead a small team to high professional standards	E	A/I/R
29	Ability to work strategically while remaining comfortable with operational detail	E	A/I
30	Proficiency in Microsoft 365, particularly Excel for workforce data analysis	E	A/I
Personal Qualities			
31	Integrity, professionalism and a strong sense of ethical practice	E	A/I/R
32	Resilience, calm authority and the ability to handle challenge constructively	E	A/I/R
33	Collaborative, collegial working style with a genuine commitment to team working across the Trust	E	A/I/R
34	Motivation by a desire to see our colleagues, academies and the Trust succeed	E	A/I
35	Genuine belief in the value of staff wellbeing, inclusion and equality as drivers of organisational performance	E	A/I
Other Requirements			
36	Willingness to travel regularly across Trust academies in Cheshire, Wirral and Liverpool	E	A/I
37	Availability for occasional evening meetings in line with the Trust's governance cycle	E	A/I
38	Valid driving licence and access to a vehicle for work purposes (authorised mileage claims will be reimbursed)	E	A
39	Enhanced DBS clearance and satisfactory pre-employment checks	E	C

How to apply

Candidates should explain how they meet the requirements of the role in their application letter, with reference to the job description and person specification. The interview process will provide further opportunities to demonstrate and discuss their skills and experience. Shortlisted candidates must bring evidence of their qualifications to interview, and any offer of employment will be subject to satisfactory references and an enhanced DBS check. We will also carry out social media checks on shortlisted candidates in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025 (KCSiE 25) guidance.

If you believe you are the ideal candidate for our People Director position or would like more information, please email our CFOO, Luci Jones to arrange an informal discussion lucijones@cheshireacademiestrust.co.uk.

To apply, please complete the application process on the View My New Term website.

Cheshire Academies Trust is fully committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. We expect all staff, volunteers, and third parties to share this commitment. The recruitment process will involve safer recruitment practices, pre-employment background checks, and is subject to the receipt of satisfactory references prior to interview. Shortlisted candidates must provide proof of qualifications at the interview. An enhanced DBS check is also required and will be conducted before final confirmation of appointment.

We welcome applications from all suitably qualified candidates. Please be advised that we are unable to provide feedback on the shortlisting process. If you do not hear from us by 22nd June, please consider your application unsuccessful on this occasion.

Post Start Date:

ASAP

Closing Date: 9am on Monday 28th September 2026

Shortlisting: Monday 28th September 2026

Interviews: Thursday 1st October 2026

We reserve the right to close advertisements early. Advertisements will therefore close at 9am either on the advertised closing date, or the day the decision has been taken to close the advertisement early.

