WE ARE HIRING

Head of People

A strategic, hands-on senior role at the heart of our next stage of growth

LOCATION
Altrincham, Greater Manchester. Hybrid, c. 2/3 days per week in the office, flexing to business need

REPORTS TO
Board of Directors

EMPLOYMENT TYPE
Full-time or part-time (4 or 5 days per week), permanent; flexible working arrangements considered

DIRECT REPORTS
None initially, with scope to build the function as the business grows

About Oakwood Corporate Services

Oakwood Corporate Services is a specialist professional services organisation, providing compliance and governance services to an enviable client base that includes household names, international businesses and US and UK law firms.

We are employee-owned, so every member of our team has a real stake in our success – we invest in, and engage with our people, as co-owners.

We are currently 60 employees strong, with ambitious plans for continued expansion. As we scale, we are building and developing the people infrastructure to match and this role is central to that effort.

Everything we do is underpinned by our core values:

Commitment to Clients: We build long-term client relationships based on delivering trusted, expert advice and a proactive, professional service.

Growing Together: Through continual training, mentoring and development, we empower our people to thrive and our business to grow.

Integrity at Heart: We act with integrity, honesty and transparency in everything we do.

Culture of Belonging: Our employee-owned structure fosters a culture of inclusion and respect, where everyone feels valued and supported.

Role Purpose

As Oakwood's first dedicated senior people professional, the Head of People will be a trusted adviser to the Board of Directors and a partner to the Client Services Directors and Operations Director.

The Head of People will lead the people function at a pivotal stage of Oakwood's growth. This is a hands-on, strategic role with a strong emphasis both on building the talent pipeline needed to support our expansion; and development of our organisational capability, particularly by equipping managers to confidently handle performance issues directly, rather than escalating to Directors.

You will play a key role in shaping a workforce that is resilient, adaptable, and engaged, one where employees are encouraged and supported to take ownership of their work and show initiative, in line with our core values. The role brings opportunity to grow and develop with the business and have a real impact on maintaining and building a unique culture and team environment.

Key Responsibilities

Manager Capability & Performance Management

- Support the Managing Directors and board with people strategy, organisation design and people risk.
- Partner the Client Services Directors and Operations Director on team structure, capability and people decisions.
- Coach, develop and mentor managers to manage and lead their teams, and equip them with the skills, tools, and confidence to manage performance issues directly, rather than escalating routine performance issues to Directors.
- Review and maintain our existing performance management frameworks, templates, and training (e.g. difficult conversations, performance improvement plans, feedback techniques).
- Act as a coach and escalation point for genuinely complex or high-risk cases, reinforcing manager ownership as the norm.
- Monitor performance management activity across the business to identify trends and additional support needs.

Recruitment & Talent Acquisition

- Own and drive end-to-end recruitment, from workforce planning through to onboarding, taking hands-on ownership of execution while working closely with Directors, who remain involved in hiring decisions.
- Build an employer brand that showcases employee ownership, technical excellence and flexibility, so that Oakwood competes effectively for high calibre company secretarial, legal and administrative professionals at all levels – whilst attracting candidates aligned with our culture.
- Develop and maintain efficient, scalable recruitment processes appropriate for a growing 60+ employee organisation.
- Build talent pipelines, including trainee and early-career routes, and manage relationships with recruitment partners and professional bodies.
- Partner with hiring managers to define role requirements and ensure a consistent, high-quality candidate experience.

Employee Relations and Team Dynamics

- Manage employee relations fairly, consistently and in line with legal requirements
- Help resolve tensions within teams, groups and between individuals, including through informal mediation.

Employee Ownership and Organisational Culture

- Support the development of a resilient workforce through effective change management, wellbeing initiatives, and clear communication as the business scales.
- Champion Oakwood's core values in all HR policies, communications, and initiatives.
- Foster a collaborative culture by encouraging cross-team working and open communication.
- Promote employee ownership by designing structures, incentives, and feedback mechanisms that encourage initiative and accountability at all levels.
- Support our Operations Director and Employee Ownership Committee in strengthening engagement and employee voice.
- Help employees understand and benefit from employee ownership, and support Directors in aligning reward and recognition with ownership principles.

Core HR Operations

- Manage the full employee lifecycle: onboarding, contracts, policies, employee relations, and offboarding.
- Ensure HR practices are proportionate, legally compliant and reflect best practice as the organisation grows.
- Manage HR operations and administration, working with our Finance Director, Operations Director and Finance and Systems Manager.
- Maintain and evolve HR policies, procedures, and documentation appropriate to Oakwood's size and growth trajectory.
- Provide accurate HR data and reporting (headcount, turnover, recruitment metrics) to leadership.

Person Specification

Essential

- Proven experience in a Head of People or senior HR generalist role, ideally within a growing SME (small-to-medium enterprise).
- Strong track record in recruitment and talent acquisition, including hard to fill professional roles.
- Demonstrable experience coaching, training and developing managers in performance management and team leadership.
- Confident handling difficult conversations and employee relations matters.
- Sound working knowledge of employment law and HR best practice, including the Employment Rights Act 2025.
- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills, with the ability to influence and build trust at all levels.
- Confident working with autonomy and advising directors and managers.
- CIPD qualification (Level 5 or above) or equivalent experience.

Desirable

- Experience in professional services, legal or financial services.
- Experience in an employee-owned or strongly values-led organisation.
- Mediation and/or coaching experience.
- Experience supporting organisations through rapid growth, designing manager training or development programmes.
- Familiarity with HR systems.

Personal Attributes

- Builds trust quickly and is credible with technically expert professionals.
- Takes ownership and shows initiative, modelling the behaviours we want to see across the business.
- Comfortable operating with autonomy in a fast-paced, evolving environment.
- Collaborative and approachable, able to build relationships across all levels of the organisation.
- Innovative in approach, bringing fresh thinking to HR challenges.
- Committed to a high standard of technical and professional excellence.

What Oakwood Offers

- Salary - £55k to £75k, dependent on experience.
- Full suite of benefits, including 25 days' holiday, pension, BUPA private health insurance, income protection and death-in-service cover, contribution to gym membership.
- Participation in profit-share bonuses through employee ownership – an element of which is paid tax-free.
- The opportunity to shape the HR function in a genuinely people-driven business, during a period of significant growth – with further role development as the business grows.
- A collaborative, values-driven culture that supports professional development.

How to Apply

By cover letter detailing current salary, desired working pattern and reasons for application, together with CV to: Kerrith.harris@oakwood-corporate.com.

Application window closes 30th November 2026.

Oakwood Corporate Services is an equal opportunities employer. We cannot support applications from candidates who require a work permit.