Wen

Head of People, Culture and Learning

Job description and person specification

Salary	£50,798 FTE per annum — Grade 6
Contract	Fixed term to 28 February 2027
Hours	Full time, 35 hours / 5 days per week
Location	Hybrid, with regular attendance at Wen's office at 20 Club Row, London E2 and meetings in London
Reporting to	Interim Executive Director
Start date	As soon as possible
Core working day	Tuesday

About Wen

Wen is an environmental charity working at the intersection of women, health, equity and environmental justice.

Since our radical beginnings in 1988, Wen has connected environmental issues with women's lives and leadership. Today our work spans climate justice and women's leadership, food and environmental justice, nature, growing and community action, health and environmental justice, and systemic change.

We support women and communities to take environmental action, amplify the voices and expertise of racialised and marginalised women, develop practical models for change and advocate for wider systemic transformation.

Our vision is a world where women, communities and the planet flourish because society is equitable, collaborative and caring.

Our values are equity, collaboration, care and intersectional eco-feminism.

Wen is committed to anti-racism and inclusive intersectional feminism, recognising the ways race, class, sexuality, disability and other inequalities intersect with gender and environmental injustice.

About the role

This is a new senior role at the heart of Wen's next chapter.

Wen is a values-led organisation moving through a period of significant change and stabilisation. Recent organisational review has identified a clear need for stronger in-house People capability: senior HR judgement, current employment-law knowledge, skilled employee-relations casework, disciplined documentation, practical policy, manager support and organisational learning.

The Head of People, Culture and Learning will be Wen's senior in-house People lead. The role will provide accessible, trusted and legally informed support to staff, managers, the Interim Executive Director and the Board of Trustees, while building the systems and capability that allow people matters to be handled consistently, fairly and with care.

The role brings together three closely connected areas:

People and employee relations — providing senior HR leadership, handling complex and sensitive people matters, and ensuring processes are fair, timely, well documented and legally sound.

Culture and management capability — supporting managers, strengthening working relationships and embedding clear expectations for how Wen manages, communicates and resolves concerns.

Learning and organisational development — building practical learning, policies, systems and management capability that leave Wen stronger and less dependent on routine external HR support.

This is therefore not simply an advisory HR role and it is not solely a culture or learning role.

We are looking for somebody who can move comfortably between detailed casework and organisation-wide improvement: someone who can handle a sensitive employee-relations matter with rigour and discretion, advise confidently on employment law, coach a manager through a difficult conversation, improve a policy or process, and help create a healthier and more consistent organisational culture.

The independent investigation remains separate from this role. The post-holder will not direct or influence that process. Once formal findings and organisational decisions are available, the role may support fair, lawful and well-documented implementation of any People actions arising from them.

Key responsibilities

1. Senior People, HR and employment-law support

- Act as Wen's senior in-house adviser on People matters, providing prompt, practical and reliable advice to the Interim Executive Director, managers and the Board of Trustees.
- Bring expert, current working knowledge of UK employment law to day-to-day People decisions, including the ACAS Code of Practice, organisational change and consultation, contracts and terms, sickness absence, reasonable adjustments and the Equality Act 2010.

- Provide accessible senior People support so staff and managers know where to go for timely advice, guidance and escalation.
- Support managers to make fair and consistent decisions while retaining appropriate accountability for management action.
- Judge accurately when a matter genuinely requires external legal or specialist advice, brief advisers well and manage those relationships proportionately.
- Reduce unnecessary reliance on routine external HR advice by bringing core capability and judgement in-house.

2. Employee relations and sensitive casework

- Personally lead or oversee complex and sensitive employee-relations matters end to end, with fairness to all parties, strict confidentiality, clear timelines and disciplined documentation.
- Ensure formal People processes are conducted consistently and in line with Wen's policies, contractual obligations, employment law and the ACAS Code of Practice.
- Establish clear case ownership, next steps, timelines, records and communication for live People matters.
- Support fair and timely approaches to grievances, disciplinary matters, capability, performance, attendance and other employee-relations issues as required.
- Support sickness-absence management, reasonable adjustments, return-to-work planning and phased returns where appropriate, with care for individual circumstances and organisational responsibilities.
- Create proportionate routes for early and informal resolution where appropriate, without blurring or bypassing formal processes where they are required.
- Ensure concerns are handled without retaliation, pre-judgement or unnecessary delay, and that all parties understand the process being followed.

3. Policy, process and People systems

- Review, prioritise and rebuild Wen's People policies and Staff Handbook so they are lawful, clear, humane, internally consistent and usable in practice.
- Prioritise areas including leave, sickness and enhanced sick pay, reasonable adjustments, performance, conduct, grievance, conflict resolution, whistleblowing and routes for raising concerns.
- Create clear distinctions between different People processes so staff and managers understand which route applies and what to expect.
- Set and maintain appropriate standards for HR records, case files, decision logs, correspondence and documentation.
- Work with Operations, Finance and the external payroll provider to ensure People records, contractual information and payroll-related changes are accurate and appropriately controlled.
- Create practical templates, checklists and guidance that improve consistency without introducing unnecessary bureaucracy.

4. Manager capability, leadership and organisational clarity

- Lead the People elements of Wen's leadership, culture and organisational-clarity work, turning agreed principles into everyday management practice.
- Build the capability of people managers through coaching, practical guidance, tools and targeted training.
- Help managers handle leave, performance, wellbeing, reasonable adjustments, difficult conversations and conflict more confidently and consistently.
- Strengthen clarity around management responsibilities, escalation routes, decision-making and accountability.
- Support managers to plan and document change carefully, including consultation and communication where required.
- Promote a management culture that combines care and participation with clarity, timeliness and accountability.

5. Culture, working relationships and wellbeing

- Help foster a culture in which concerns can be raised early, heard properly and responded to without defensiveness or retaliation.
- Support constructive working relationships and appropriate conflict resolution across the organisation.
- Advise on the wider People and wellbeing consequences of organisational change and prolonged uncertainty, ensuring support is practical and appropriately bounded.
- Work with managers and relevant providers to ensure staff understand and can access available wellbeing support, including the Employee Assistance Programme.
- Promote psychologically safer and more consistent ways of working while recognising that wellbeing support does not replace appropriate management, HR or legal processes.
- Ensure Wen's values of equity, collaboration, care and intersectional eco-feminism are reflected in how People practices are designed and applied.

6. Learning and development

- Design and coordinate a practical approach to learning and development across Wen, linking individual development with organisational need.
- Identify priority capability gaps for managers and staff and develop proportionate responses through coaching, training, peer learning, guidance or external support.
- Support induction and role clarity so colleagues joining Wen understand how the organisation works, how decisions are made and where support sits.
- Create reusable learning resources and tools that can continue to support the organisation after the fixed-term appointment ends.
- Encourage reflective learning from People cases and organisational experience without breaching confidentiality or personal privacy.

7. Governance, assurance and organisational recovery

- Provide clear, well-evidenced People reporting and advice to the Interim Executive Director and Board of Trustees, supporting sound and timely governance decisions.
- Maintain appropriate visibility of material People risks, emerging themes, case status and required decisions while protecting confidentiality and personal data.
- Support the organisation to respond appropriately to formal recommendations, findings or decisions arising from completed reviews or investigations, where these create People actions for Wen.
- Ensure implementation of organisational decisions is fair, legally informed, properly documented and does not pre-empt or reinterpret independent findings.
- Help establish a sustainable People operating model for Wen, including clarity about what should sit in-house and when external specialist advice is warranted.
- Document key processes, decisions and learning so the function can be handed on rather than rebuilt from scratch.

Key relationships

The Head of People, Culture and Learning will work particularly closely with:

- the Interim Executive Director
- the Interim COO
- people managers and team leads
- staff across Wen
- Operations and Finance
- the external payroll provider
- external HR, employment-law and other specialist advisers where required
- the Employee Assistance Programme and other relevant wellbeing providers
- members of the Board of Trustees where appropriate

What success will look like

During the first month

- Staff and managers have a clear and accessible senior People contact and understand how to seek advice or raise People matters.
- There is a reliable overview of live People matters, with clear ownership, status, next steps, documentation and escalation where required.
- Immediate employment-law, employee-relations and wellbeing risks have been identified and prioritised.
- A practical transition plan is in place for reducing routine dependency on the external HR retainer while retaining specialist external support where genuinely needed.

- Priority policy, Staff Handbook and People-process gaps have been identified and sequenced.
- Managers understand the immediate support available to them and the standards expected for documentation and case handling.

By approximately three months

- Wen has clearer, more consistent and more legally robust core People policies and processes.
- Live employee-relations matters are being handled to clear timelines, with appropriate records and communication.
- Managers have received practical coaching and targeted development on priority People responsibilities.
- Sickness absence, reasonable adjustments, return-to-work and other recurring People processes are being handled more consistently.
- Staff and managers have clearer routes for raising concerns and understand the distinction between informal resolution, grievance, whistleblowing and other formal processes.
- People reporting gives the Executive and Board of Trustees appropriate visibility of material risks, themes and required decisions.
- Learning and organisational-development priorities have been translated into a practical programme of activity.

By the end of the appointment

- Wen has a functioning and sustainable People operating rhythm with clearer ownership, systems, policies and escalation routes.
- The organisation is less dependent on routine external HR advice because core senior People capability has been established in-house.
- Managers have increased confidence and capability in handling day-to-day People responsibilities.
- People policies and the Staff Handbook provide a clearer and more consistent framework for staff and managers.
- Employee-relations casework is supported by stronger documentation, clearer timelines and more consistent process.
- The Executive and Board of Trustees have significantly better visibility of People risks, organisational themes and actions requiring governance oversight.
- Wen has stronger foundations for culture, learning, working relationships and organisational clarity.
- The function can be handed on rather than rebuilt from scratch.

Person specification

HR, employee relations and employment law

- CIPD qualified and a current member of the CIPD at Associate level or above.

- Expert, current working knowledge of UK employment law and its practical application, including the ACAS Code of Practice, organisational change and consultation, sickness absence, reasonable adjustments and the Equality Act 2010.
- A strong and recent track record of personally handling complex, sensitive and contested employee-relations matters end to end.
- Experience operating in environments where People decisions require particularly strong judgement, documentation, scrutiny and procedural fairness.
- Ability to distinguish confidently between matters that can be handled in-house and those requiring external legal or specialist advice.

Policy, process and People systems

- Demonstrable experience of writing, reviewing and implementing HR policy that is legally robust, practical and genuinely usable.
- Strong case-management and record-keeping discipline, with meticulous attention to documentation and confidentiality.
- Experience improving People processes, templates, guidance, case tracking or comparable HR systems.
- Ability to create enough structure to provide clarity and control without introducing unnecessary bureaucracy.

Culture, learning and manager development

- Experience of coaching and developing line managers to handle People matters confidently and well.
- Experience of leading culture change, organisational development, leadership-development or organisational-learning activity.
- Ability to translate broad cultural ambitions into practical management expectations, routines, tools and behaviour.
- Experience designing or coordinating learning and development in a small or medium-sized organisation.
- A sound understanding of workplace wellbeing and psychologically safer practice, alongside clear professional boundaries between wellbeing support and formal HR processes.

Governance and judgement

- Impeccable judgement, discretion and confidentiality, with the resilience to hold difficult situations calmly and fairly.
- Ability to provide clear, evidence-based advice to senior leaders and trustees on complex People matters.
- Strong understanding of procedural fairness, appropriate governance boundaries and the importance of avoiding pre-judgement.
- Ability to absorb complex information quickly, identify what matters and prioritise effectively in a changing environment.

Communication and relationships

- Excellent written and verbal communication.
- Ability to explain employment-law and HR issues clearly to people who are not People specialists.
- A calm, credible and approachable style that enables staff and managers to seek advice early.
- Ability to build trust while maintaining appropriate professional boundaries and organisational accountability.
- Confidence handling difficult conversations and communicating sensitive decisions with care and clarity.

Values and approach

- A collaborative and enabling leadership style.
- Commitment to equity, collaboration and care.
- Understanding of, and commitment to, intersectional feminist approaches and environmental justice.
- Ability to work sensitively and effectively with diverse colleagues and communities.
- A commitment to fair process, consistency, transparency and respect for individual agency.

Desirable experience

- CIPD Level 7 Advanced Diploma, Chartered Member (Chartered MCIPD) or Chartered Fellow (Chartered FCIPD).
- Experience working in the charity, voluntary, campaigning or social-justice sector.
- Familiarity with charity governance and Charity Commission expectations as they affect People matters.
- Experience supporting an organisation through recovery and rebuilding following investigation, dispute, significant change or organisational stabilisation.
- Experience of organisational change, consultation and restructuring in a small or medium-sized organisation.
- Experience working alongside external employment-law advisers and managing specialist advice proportionately.
- Experience supporting unionised workplaces or environments with recognised staff representation.

The person we are looking for

The successful candidate will be an experienced senior People practitioner who is as comfortable with the detail of a live employee-relations case as they are with building a better People system for the whole organisation.

They will understand that strong People practice is not about adding process for its own sake. It is about creating fair, clear and reliable ways of working so that staff know what

to expect, managers know what is required of them, and difficult matters are handled early, consistently and with appropriate care.

They will be comfortable moving between very different kinds of work.

In the same week, they might:

- advise a manager on sickness absence and reasonable adjustments;
- lead a sensitive employee-relations process;
- coach a manager ahead of a difficult conversation;
- rewrite a People policy or Staff Handbook section;
- review a return-to-work or phased-return plan;
- brief an external employment-law adviser on a genuinely specialist issue;
- prepare a concise People-risk update for the Interim Executive Director or Board of Trustees;
- design a practical manager-learning session; and
- improve a People process, template or case-management tool so that the next issue is easier to handle well.

They will bring calm, rigour and humanity to difficult situations and will enjoy leaving behind clearer systems, stronger management capability and a more resilient People function than they inherited.

Working at Wen

Wen is a values-led organisation with a long history, ambitious programmes and a committed team.

We work collaboratively and take seriously our responsibilities to the women and communities we work alongside, our partners and funders, and one another.

This role joins Wen at an important point in its development.

There is a great deal already here to build from: talented and knowledgeable colleagues, a strong values base, an active programme of organisational learning and a clear commitment to strengthening the way Wen supports and manages its people.

The opportunity is to bring together strong HR practice, employment-law judgement, manager support, culture and learning into a People function that is clearer, more accessible and more resilient for Wen's future.

Benefits

- 25 days' annual leave plus 8 bank holidays, pro rata
- Annual leave increasing to 27 days after five years' service
- Employer pension contribution of 6%
- Employee Assistance Programme, including free counselling sessions
- Access to training and development opportunities

- Menstrual leave
- Time off in lieu for agreed overtime
- Flexible and hybrid working