



THE
BEDFORD
COLLEGE
GROUP

CANDIDATE BRIEF
October 2026

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP APPOINTMENT

Chief People Officer



A message from our CEO

Thank you for your interest in joining The Bedford College Group as our Chief People Officer.

I believe wholeheartedly that organisations succeed or fail because of leadership, culture and people. Buildings matter. Systems matter. Strategy matters. But ultimately, it is people who determine whether an organisation merely functions or truly flourishes.

That is why this appointment is so important.

As one of the largest college groups in England, we serve more than 20,000 students, we employ more than 1,800 members of staff and work with thousands of employers across Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire and beyond. Every day, our staff help people transform their lives through education, training and skills development. It is work that changes futures, strengthens communities and supports economic growth.

Our ambition is clear. We want to be recognised as an exceptional organisation, not simply because of what we achieve, but because of how we achieve it.

We want to be a place where expectations are high, standards are uncompromising, talent is developed, leadership is valued and every colleague understands the vital contribution they make to our mission. We want an organisational culture that is ambitious, inclusive, accountable and continuously improving. Most importantly, we want a culture where people can do their very best work.

Building and sustaining that culture requires exceptional leadership.

The Chief People Officer will play a pivotal role in shaping the future of our organisation. This is not a traditional human resources position. It is a strategic executive leadership role with responsibility for culture, organisational development, leadership capability, workforce planning, talent management and organisational performance.



Build Futures.

Shape Communities.

Change Lives.



You will join an ambitious Executive Leadership Team that is committed to delivering meaningful improvement and lasting impact. We are determined not to stand still. We believe there is always more we can achieve, more we can learn and better ways to serve our students, communities and employers.

The successful candidate will bring strategic insight, credibility, authenticity and resilience. They will be someone who understands that culture is created through everyday behaviours, leadership actions and organisational choices. They will be equally comfortable shaping long-term strategy and driving operational excellence. Most importantly, they will be passionate about the difference great people and great leadership can make.

This is a rare opportunity to influence every part of a large and complex organisation and to leave a lasting legacy for thousands of colleagues and students.

If you are excited by the prospect of leading a transformational people agenda, strengthening organisational culture and helping shape the future of one of the country's leading college groups, I would be delighted to hear from you. I would welcome an informal conversation with prospective candidates. Please contact our FE Associates recruitment partner, **Lucy.Horne@fea.co.uk**, who will arrange this.

Thank you once again for your interest in The Bedford College Group. I hope the information within this pack inspires you to consider joining us on the next stage of our journey.

With best wishes,

Yiannis Koursis OBE
Chief Executive Officer
The Bedford College Group

A regional group with national ambition

20,000

learners across multiple sites

7

distinct colleges within the Group

'Good'

Ofsted judgement for the Group

Outstanding

ESFA financial rating, retained for many years

OUR STORY

Growth through partnership

TBCG is one of the largest FE providers in England and has grown rapidly in recent years. Initially based on the old Bedford College site, it merged with Tresham College in 2018 to create pan-Bedfordshire and North Northamptonshire provision built around regional market towns. This was boosted by Central Bedfordshire College (CBC) joining the Group in February 2023.

The Group holds an Ofsted judgement of 'good', having rapidly improved the quality rating of Tresham on merger.

WHERE WE ARE

Sites across the region

Bedford

Kettering

Corby

Wellingborough

Silverstone · motorsport

Shuttleworth · land-based

Dunstable

Leighton Buzzard

Located in the southern part of the Oxford–Cambridge Arc and within easy commuting distance of London, the region benefits from buoyant economic growth, strong population projections and world-class employers who need world-class technical skills.



STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2027

"To be the **best and most authoritative further education provider in the South East Midlands."**

OUR AMBITION

A system leader in FE

This aim reflects our position as the largest provider of FE in the region and our ambition to be recognised as a system leader in national FE and a major source of civic leadership within our communities. TBCG is explicitly a regional institution – our expansion has been to achieve the benefits of regional integration, not growth for its own sake.

We are committed to making a substantial contribution with regional partners, and intend to be a leader in how digital technology changes FE.

FINANCIAL POSITION

Strong and well managed

The Group's financial position is strong, with a sector reputation for excellent financial management. While the national funding environment is difficult, TBCG is better placed than most to weather it and has a strong working relationship with its banks.

OUR VALUES

Students at the heart

TBCG remains a values-driven institution with a strong commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, delivering programmes that stretch and challenge our students.



Job description

Job Title:	Chief People Officer
Hours:	37 hours per week
Main campus base:	Any campus within The Bedford College Group, by agreement, with regular travel across the Group's campuses and to external meetings.
Reports to:	Group Chief Executive Officer
Member of:	Executive Leadership Team
Directly manages:	Group Director of People
Salary:	Competitive

Role context

The Bedford College Group provides further education and skills across Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire. Its purpose is to help individuals, communities and society flourish through education, raising aspirations and reducing inequality to create a sustainable future. The Chief People Officer will help the Group deliver its Strategic Plan 2027 and shape its future direction. The role brings together people strategy, organisational development and culture, strengthening leadership and organisational performance across a complex organisation with multiple campuses.

Job purpose

Lead a people and culture agenda that gives the Group the leadership capability, skills, capacity and organisational structures needed to deliver excellent outcomes for students, employers and communities. Build an inclusive culture in which clear expectations, accountability and care for colleagues support sustained performance.

As a member of the Executive Leadership Team, contribute to the leadership and performance of the whole Group. Provide strategic advice and assurance to the CEO, Corporation and its committees on people, culture and workforce matters.

Leadership and delivery

The CPO sets strategic direction, leads organisational change and provides executive assurance. The Group Director of People leads the operational delivery and continuous improvement of People Services. The CPO remains accountable to the CEO for the function's performance, resources and impact.



Main responsibilities

People strategy and culture

- Lead a Group People and Culture Strategy aligned with organisational priorities, with clear outcomes, delivery plans and measures of impact.
- Lead cultural development across the Group, building shared values and expectations while respecting the strengths of individual colleges and campuses.
- Embed inclusion and equity in recruitment, progression, leadership and the everyday experience of staff. Identify barriers and evaluate the impact of action taken.
- Contribute to Group strategy and collective executive decisions. Be visible and accessible across campuses, model the Group's values and represent the Group externally.

Leadership capability and performance

- Establish a leadership framework that defines expected behaviours, standards and accountabilities, supported by effective development and coaching.
- Align team and individual objectives with Group priorities. Ensure appraisal and performance processes support meaningful feedback, development, recognition and timely action on underperformance.
- Strengthen managers' capability to lead people consistently and fairly, including attendance, conduct, capability and engagement.
- Lead talent and succession planning for senior and business-critical roles, with clear career and development pathways.
- Work with education and curriculum leaders to ensure professional learning supports teaching quality, organisational performance and student outcomes.
- Coach, advise and constructively challenge executive and senior colleagues on agreed people and leadership standards.

Workforce planning and organisational change

- Lead strategic workforce planning linked to organisational and financial plans, identifying future skills, capacity and leadership needs and developing responses to different scenarios.
- Lead organisational design and the people aspects of transformation, ensuring structures, roles and ways of working support effective decisions and future needs.
- Lead the people aspects of mergers, acquisitions, partnerships and new provision, including consultation, cultural integration and relevant employment transfer requirements.
- Ensure organisational change is well led, communicated and evaluated, with fair consultation and effective management of workforce risks.

Employee experience and partnerships

- Strengthen the Group's employer reputation and employment offer. Improve recruitment, induction and retention, with particular attention to critical and student-facing roles.
- Lead the approach to staff voice, engagement and wellbeing. Ensure feedback informs decisions and colleagues can see what action follows.
- Lead strategic relationships with recognised trade unions, supporting constructive negotiation, consultation and partnership working.
- Ensure recognition and the wider employee experience reinforce the Group's values and support colleagues to do their best work.

People Services and reward

- Lead, develop and hold to account the Group Director of People, agreeing priorities, service standards and measures of quality, efficiency and impact.
- Provide executive oversight of HR advice, employee relations, recruitment, learning and development, contracts, reward, payroll and people administration.
- Ensure services and policies are consistent, accessible and effective, with accurate payroll, reliable controls and compliant employment practice.
- Set reward principles and develop proposals that balance fairness, affordability, internal relationships and external competitiveness. Seek approval through the Group's delegated authority arrangements, including the separate arrangements for Senior Post Holders.
- Provide senior oversight of complex employee relations matters, securing specialist advice where needed and preserving appropriate independence in case handling.
- Manage the function's budget and resources and ensure required quality and performance reviews are completed.

Workforce insight and digital improvement

- Use workforce data, staff feedback and relevant benchmarking to identify priorities, evaluate progress and recommend action.
- Maintain a balanced dashboard covering culture, engagement, retention, workforce capacity, talent, leadership and service performance. Explain what the evidence means for organisational outcomes.
- Sponsor implementation of the new HR system and continuing improvement of people systems, ensuring reliable data, appropriate controls and a better experience for staff and managers.

Governance and assurance

- Provide clear reports, advice and assurance to the Corporation, Resources Committee, Bedford College Professional Services Board and other committees in line with their terms of reference and attendance arrangements.
- Provide the annual Senior Post Holders' pay, benefits and expenses report to the Remuneration Committee, supporting evidence-based decisions and appropriate management of conflicts of interest.
- Lead executive assurance on employment practice and the workforce aspects of safeguarding, safer recruitment, data protection and public sector requirements, working with the relevant executive leads.
- Identify, monitor and mitigate workforce risks through the Group's risk management arrangements.
- Lead the people and culture contribution to inspections and external reviews, demonstrating the impact of leadership, staff development and culture on education quality.

Group responsibilities

- Travel across campuses and attend evening meetings as required.
- Participate in the duty-manager rota, open days and examination invigilation in line with agreed executive arrangements.
- Undertake investigations or hearings only where appropriate independence can be maintained.



Safeguarding

Promote and safeguard the welfare of children, young people and adults at risk, reporting concerns through Group procedures.

Equality & Diversity

Uphold equality, diversity, health and safety, confidentiality and appropriate professional boundaries.

Health & Safety

Follow health and safety requirements in line with College policy and procedures.

Training & Development

Maintain professional knowledge and undertake required training.



Person specification

We welcome applications from senior people leaders across sectors who can demonstrate relevant experience in complex organisations and a strong commitment to further education and its impact on students and communities.

Essential criteria

- Substantial strategic people leadership experience at executive or director level in a large, complex organisation, supported by relevant professional knowledge and continuing development.
- Evidence of translating organisational priorities into a people and culture strategy with measurable outcomes.
- A track record of leading culture change and organisational improvement with demonstrable impact.
- Experience of organisational design and leading complex change, including effective communication, consultation and risk management.
- Experience of strategic workforce planning linked to organisational objectives, future skills and financial plans.
- Experience of strengthening leadership capability, performance management, talent development and succession.
- Experience of leading through senior people professionals, with executive oversight of effective HR services, employee relations, reward and payroll.
- Experience of building constructive relationships with recognised trade unions and leading negotiation and consultation.
- Sound knowledge of employment practice, with the judgement to manage sensitive issues, recognise limits of authority and obtain specialist advice.
- Ability to use workforce data, benchmarking and staff insight to inform decisions and evaluate results, supported by confidence in digital people systems.
- Credibility and influence with executive leaders and governing bodies, including clear written and verbal communication and constructive challenge.
- Ability to manage budgets and resources, balancing service quality, affordability and organisational priorities.
- Evidence of embedding inclusion and equity in people practices and improving the experience of colleagues.
- Collaborative, visible and values-led leadership, combining high expectations with care, resilience, sound judgement and the ability to develop others.
- Commitment to the Group's educational purpose, student outcomes and safeguarding, including appropriate professional boundaries and the ability to apply relevant sector requirements.

Desirable criteria

- Relevant postgraduate or professional qualification in HR, organisational development, leadership or a related discipline, and/or Chartered membership or Fellowship of the CIPD.
- Experience in further education, wider education or the public sector, and knowledge of education inspection and safer recruitment requirements.
- Experience of digital transformation in people services, including the responsible use of AI.
- A relevant coaching, organisational development or change management accreditation.

Practical requirements

Ability to work across Group campuses and attend external and evening meetings, with reasonable adjustments where required. Willingness to participate in agreed executive duty-cover arrangements and complete required safeguarding and other training.

Terms and Conditions

The appointed candidate will receive the following:

- a competitive salary
- 35 days annual leave plus bank holidays
- a pension through the local government pension scheme.



How to Apply

We have retained FE Associates to support us in finding an outstanding individual to inspire excellent practice across our organisation. The application process is outlined below.

1

Initial Discussion

Prior to submitting an application, interested parties should arrange an initial conversation with our FE Associates lead consultant, by emailing Lucy.Horne@fea.co.uk, to discuss the role before the closing date.

2

Recorded First-Stage Teams Interview

Once you have obtained the full information, had an informal discussion with the lead consultant and it is agreed for you to proceed with an application, the lead consultant will schedule a first-stage interview via Teams with you which will take place before the closing date and will be recorded. Once this interview has been scheduled, you should submit your application.

3

Apply Online

Please visit www.fea.co.uk/job/tbcg-cpo and complete the registration form to access the online application form and the equality and diversity form. At Step 2: Submitting your application, click Apply now.

4

Shortlisting and Invitation to Interview

After the closing time/date, our lead consultant will send all applications and recorded first-stage discussions to the College for shortlisting. Once the shortlist has been agreed, candidates will be notified by the lead consultant and shortlisted candidates will be invited to a formal interview/selection process with the College.

5

Safer Recruitment and Due Diligence Checks

Applicants are advised that, as part of the statutory guidance on Keeping Children Safe in Education, colleges/training providers are advised to make arrangements for an online search as part of due diligence on shortlisted candidates. The searches are aimed to assist in identifying things said or done that may harm the organisation's reputation or make the candidate unsuitable to work with children, young people and vulnerable adults. Where a cause of concern arises from the online search, a risk assessment will determine whether the concern is of such a nature that it is appropriate to exclude a candidate from the process or whether a clarification discussion, before or during an interview, is needed.

Key Dates

Closing date for applications: 9am on Friday 27 November 2026.

Interviews to take place on Monday 7 and Tuesday 8 December 2026.



The Bedford College Group

Bedford College (registered office)
Cauldwell Street, Bedford MK42 9AH

Tel: 01234 291000
bedfordcollegegroup.ac.uk

Shape the future of further education **with us.**

FEA EXECUTIVE SEARCH →

