Calico's People Strategy 2023-26

Embracing change together

A message from Anthony, Group Chief Executive

We have been through a lot together over the last few years and our last People Strategy has served us well. I am clear that our values have held strong through the challenges we faced, guiding our decisions, and connecting us together in our shared purpose to make a real difference to people's lives.

This People Strategy is an evolution of our approach. The first guiding principle of our business is that it is our people make the real difference. So, as the challenging times in which we all live and work continue, looking after our people remains our focus.

It is important to me that Calico is the kind of organisation where people want to work; that people choose to come and work here and want to stay. A strong and secure organisation that has a clear purpose and is values led. Where the work is meaningful and the culture fair and inclusive. Where people feel safe, cared for, and are supported to perform, learn and grow and stay well. Where the leaders are visible, honest and listen.

What I do know is that we won't always get it right, because Calico is a complex organisation doing difficult work in difficult times. But we will always try to make working at Calico the best experience we can. To help us do this I ask that you take every opportunity you can to tell us how things are for you.

I am confident that by working together, each of us playing our part, we can embrace a future where we remain strong, do more for our customers and enjoy working here.

Thank you for all that you do every day.

Anthony Duerden
Chief Executive
The Calico Group

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1. Introduction

The Calico Group exists to make a real difference to people's lives. This is our shared purpose across the Group and in 2022 we set out our new vision to describe our ambition as an organisation.

A community of people, working together with customers to close the equality gap and to show others how we create a fairer society.

We have four strategic objectives setting out how this vision will be achieved:

To work collaboratively with our customers and communities, to create sustainable change, for existing and future generations.	To ensure that our businesses are strong, well-governed and environmentally friendly
To create a place where people want to work, now and in the future.	To set an example, influencing people and organisations to bring about positive social change.

We have translated these strategic objectives into outcomes and have measures and targets in place to monitor progress, providing a performance framework for the organisation.

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We have defined our culture through our values which we all share and behaviours which help us live these values every day in the work we do and the decisions we make.

We believe we are a values-led organisation, which means we are continually balancing the 3 aspects of our values statement: looking after our people, our customers, and the organisation.

This is challenging, requiring constant attention, adjusting the 3 'dials' of focus in response to what is happening both inside the organisation and externally around us.

As an organisation we have grown significantly over the last few years. Through this growth we remain connected to, and care about, our people and customers.

We have a new ambitious 10-year Customer Strategy that describes the journey we need to go on with our customers. This will require transformational change to not only our processes and systems but our mindset and behaviours.

Our People Strategy is wholly aligned to this cultural shift, taking people on a journey of self-awareness to unlock their potential, which will not only improve services to customers but also enhance their own job and even life fulfilment.

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At the heart of the Customer Strategy are the principles of Diversity, Equality/Equity, and Inclusion. These are just as relevant for the People Strategy and the hope is that the two strategies will dovetail together to help us close the equality gap and work towards equity in both our employment and services.

For Calico to be successful and sustainable in the future, everyone working in our community of people needs to have a shared commitment to living our

values. Whilst our values have remained constant over many years, our behaviours have been revised to support our new vision and Customer Strategy more directly.

Our People Strategy sets out how we will create a place where people want to work, now and in the future, to ensure we have the talent, commitment, and engagement we will need to achieve our vision, making a real difference to people's lives in transformational ways.

OUR BEHAVIOURS
Living our Values

Act in the interest of others

DO THE RIGHT THING

Be accountable

Be inclusive

Make it happen

DELIVER OUTCOMES

Know our business

Be innovative

Going one step further with our customers

Our Values
We all commit to, and care about

Improving and strengthening ourselves and our organisation

Our wellbeing as individuals and teams

To achieve our purpose of making a real difference to people's lives

Seek & give feedback

LEARN & GROW

Share experiences

Learn from mistakes

Value difference

DEVELOP RELATION-SHIPS

Listen to understand

Empower others

Play to strengths

WORK TOGETHER

Connect & collaborate

Celebrate Achievements

Have fun

LOOK AFTER YOURSELF & OTHERS

Be kind

Pause and reflect

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2. Looking Outwards – our operating environment

One of the most significant effects of the pandemic is that it has accelerated the pace of change in every sphere of our lives. Previously we have stated that Calico operates in an ever changing, complex and challenging operating environment, often referred to as the VUCA world (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous).

Over the last 3 years, this has escalated to the point where it is now described as operating in a 'permacrisis'. It has been a turbulent period for employee experiences, seeing phenomena such as the Great Resignation, War for Talent, and Quiet Quitting

Events over the last few years, including the pandemic, Brexit, cost of living crisis, to name a few, have put untenable strain on health, care, housing, education, and other sectors. Calico operates across many sectors and has had to adapt and respond to increasing challenges.

This has affected our people in many ways as they try to look after their customers and each other. As the equality gap in society widens, we are seeing customers with ever more complex needs, placing extra demands on our employees, often impacting on their wellbeing.

The significant rise in the cost of living means our people are facing more financial pressures and having a competitive employment offer has never been more important in attracting and retaining staff. It was reported in The HR 2023 Outlook that 1 in 5 workers were looking to change their jobs in the upcoming year. Giving people a reason to stay is as important as attracting them in the first place.

The housing sector is under scrutiny regarding the condition of its housing stock and the relationship they have with their customers. Staff need to be empowered to engage with customers in normal ways, recognising that well-chosen small things can be transformational.

The health and social care sectors are struggling to cope with demand, facing significant recruitment challenges and the need to develop more trauma informed practices.

The Pandemic has changed people's expectations of work – where, when, and how they work, with flexibility and digital tools paramount. A widening gap in employer versus employee expectations is requiring a shift from collective policies to tailored work conditions.

Insights from the Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development inform us that increasingly people want to work for a responsible, ethical business that is purpose and principled led. Working in an inclusive culture, investment in learning and development and looking after wellbeing are all becoming increasingly important to future generations.

Leaders are getting very tired, they have got through the last few years by pulling on the good things from before the pandemic, but now they need to replenish. They don't need more competency models and policies but rather pragmatic, practical tools. Middle managers report spending 80% of their time on things that don't add value. They are key stakeholders who want certainty and clarity around their objectives and to regain a sense of control and autonomy over their work.

The Institute for Employment Studies indicates in its April 2023 briefing that whilst the labour market is starting to recover, vacancies remain very high and there are more people than ever out of work due to long term ill-health. Those who are most disadvantaged in the labour market are struggling the most to get into work, even as the economy continues to create jobs.

Whilst measures announced such as more funded childcare and the Shared Prosperity Fund will help, they will not be enough to meet the scale of the challenges. It is recognised that employers have a key role to play in helping people stay in work, and enabling more people who are out of work to return, through more inclusive recruitment practices, flexible job design, better training, and support in the first few months of employment, improved line management and better access to workplace support.

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3. Looking Inwards – where are we now?

Our Successes

Our previous People Strategy – One Calico, has served us well, evolving our culture and keeping people engaged through challenging times. We are particularly proud of:

- Our values remain embedded across the organisation, our people recognise their importance to our success and people are attracted to work for a truly values-led organisation. We never take our values for granted and constantly nurture them.

- We have maintained high engagement levels, as measured by our employee engagement survey, which is a significant achievement in the current climate.

- Our focus on developing our leaders through our leadership programmes and forums has had an impact, evidenced in engagement scores.

- Our employment offer has been strengthened, helping us attract and retain people in a difficult employment market. This has included reviewing pay levels, with particular focus on our lower paid colleagues, introducing health benefits and developing a much-enhanced learning and development offer.

- The introduction of 'support when you need it most' for our people including special leave arrangements, access to a wide range of employee assistance and timely one-off initiatives such as a Summer Boost programme.

- We have developed an approach to navigate what working flexibly post pandemic means for us. We recognise the importance of being in the workplace as most of our services are delivered in person, and being connected in person helps nurture our culture. This has been supported by the development of a collaboration hub in Centenary Court, creating a flexible, modern workspace for staff to work together and independently. That said, flexibility to allow for some working from home, where it is appropriate for the individual, their team and the business is also important to meet expectations of work in today's world.

- People across the Group come together as One Calico, to connect, collaborate, learn, and have fun, with a shared purpose and values. One Calico events have been re-established and provide occasions to look forward to and happy memories to take away.

- Our Step Further framework continues to provide a blue-print for managers, reminding them of 'what works well', with regards supporting their people to perform, grow and stay well, no matter what is going on in the operating environment around them.

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Our Challenges

We recognise that the investment in our people is essential to the success of our business, which can be challenging in more difficult financial times. The relentless task we face navigating our organisation through the challenges presented by external world and how they impact on our customers, our people, and our business, means we are asking more and more of our leaders. We know that just keeping everything going and maintaining engagement levels will be a challenge going forward. More specific challenges that we face are:

- Recruiting and retaining staff in the volatile employment market, despite the focused work we have already done in this area. There is a 'war for talent' for some roles (technical, digital, construction, clinical, senior leaders) and financial pressures can restrict renumeration packages. This climate can lead to poor recruitment decisions. We have seen an increase in people leaving the organisation within the first 12 months of their employment.

- Continually reviewing our approach to pay and our wider employment offer, to remain competitive and do the best we can for our people, aiming to address inequalities where we can.

- We have a lot of new and developing managers who need upskilling in terms of their competence and judgement in creating the employee experience.

- Our people are purpose driven and the care and commitment they have for our customers is often humbling. However, the darker side of this passion means they can struggle to switch off from their work and over time this can affect their wellbeing and mental health. As our customers become more vulnerable, and their needs more complex, and this is becoming an increasing issue.

- Many of our people bring their particular lived experience to their work in support of their customers. Whilst this is almost a USP for some of our services, it does present some employment challenges regarding how we support these employees to ensure they can stay well and perform their role effectively.

- Keeping people safe in challenging work environments where they are required to deal with things such as violence, aggression, racism, and death is an increasing challenge for the organisation.

- Given the diverse nature and complexity of the organisation, ensuring a consistent employee experience, across all teams is increasingly difficult.

- There is always so much to do, and change is constant. Workloads in some parts of the organisation can be excessive, particularly where there is higher staff turnover.

- Whilst we have significantly improved our learning and development offer, with a wide range of on-line learning, qualification training and clear career roadmaps, we still face the challenge of truly embedding a learning culture, where learning is prioritised.

- Embracing new ways of working in a digital age, ensuring the right systems, processes and skills are in place will need to have increased focus to ensure we progress the implementation of our Customer Strategy.

- Ensuring we find the balance of shared commitments, whereby people are both supported in their wellbeing and accountable for their performance.

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4. Looking forward – where do we want to be?

The Employee Experience.

Our People Strategy describes how we will achieve the high levels of employee engagement essential for business success.

Employee engagement can be defined as 'the emotional commitment people have to the organisation and its goals'.

Engagement is built through the employee experience at work, in other words creating the right workplace experience for all colleagues to give their best each day.

To achieve this, it is imperative that there is a shared commitment between the employee, their manager and the organisation. More description of what this means can be found in the supporting document 'Our Shared Commitments'.

This strategy is structured around a 'Future of Work' model of the 5 key workplace conditions which is used by our employee surveying platform.

Whilst the People Strategy sets the overall direction for the Group, each company will have its own People Plan detailing their particular focus and actions. This will help us achieve a balance of consistency in the employee experience and responding to local requirements, which can be challenging in such a complex and diverse organisation as Calico.

Meaningful Work
Motivating Managers
Fantastic Environment
Realising Potential
Trust in Leadership.

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Meaningful Work

I love what I do and know why I do it

We will:

- All protect our values and behaviours, recognising they are what underpins the organisation and will make us successful and sustainable in the future.

- Understand our role and responsibilities, with clear work objectives that contribute to the success of our team and wider organisation.

- Be excited about the changes we are making across the Group to provide transformational customer service.

- Look forward to coming together as One Calico to connect, collaborate, learn, and have fun, promoting working together for better outcomes and celebrating our achievements.

- Embrace new ways of working and technology, improving our systems and processes and the way we communicate so we can improve the way we manage our workloads.

- Use our time effectively to plan our work, move things on and complete our tasks leading to a greater sense of achievement in our work.

- Build fun, joy and 'something to look forward to' into our work, recognising that this is an important antidote to the difficult work we do and is essential for our health and happiness.

Motivating Managers

My manager knows me and supports me to be my best

We will:

- Recognise the importance of the line manager in creating the employee experience, ensuring we have the capacity and capability across the Group to deliver a consistent, positive experience for our people that is aligned with the Step Further Framework.

- Build the confidence and skills of managers in the foundations of good leadership that we know work well for us, through our leadership programmes, forums, coaching and mentoring and communications.

- Ensure our managers have the appropriate balance of people and technical skills to be able to look after our people, customers, and the business, identifying where additional, tailored support is required.

- Have a continuous two-way dialogue around our performance (1-1 catch up), personal growth (My Time) and wellbeing (check-in) with our manager.

- Develop the future leaders we will need through succession planning and appropriate development programmes.

- Focus on how we bring new people into our organisation, ensuring our induction arrangements are effective and cover both One Calico and role specific information.

- Develop relationships with each other that our routed in genuine trust and care using the Relationship Pledge as our guide.

- Take time to pause and reflect as an essential practice for individuals and teams to look after themselves, as well as to continually seek to improve and learn.

- Engender a shared commitment approach to ensure our people are accountable and ready for their work and given the support they and their families need when they need it.

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Our Relationship Pledge
The commitment we all make:

Listen Carefully and Deeply
Being curious and giving your full attention to what is really going on

Understand Our Differences
Recognising and meeting individual needs.

Give and Take
Cooperating with others in your shared interest

Encourage and Appreciate
Being kind and showing how much we value each other

Don't Judge
Creating a sense of safety and belonging

Tell the Truth
Being bold enough to speak out and challenge with integrity

Be Yourself
Being open and sharing your experiences, thoughts and feelings

Fantastic Environment

I am well, looked after and have a say in how I work

We will:

- Aim to be flexible in the way we personalise working arrangements for our people to allow them to have more autonomy over their own employee experience, ensuring the needs of the individual, the team and the organisation are met.

- Provide clear expectations of what we expect of each other in terms of our conduct and professional boundaries, particularly supporting our colleagues who bring their lived experience to their work daily.

- Ensure the employee's voice is actively sought, listened to, and acted upon through appropriate forums, surveys, listening groups, and leaders being visible in the workplace.

- Have the best employment offer we can, encompassing the whole employee value proposition: purposeful work, being values-led, the full range of employment and management practices, learning and development opportunities, as well as competitive and innovative pay and benefits.

- Support the wellbeing and personal safety of all our people, particularly seeking to build levels of resilience to cope with the nature of our work and ensuring we have the procedures in place to deal effectively with incidents that occur.

- Ensure there are safe spaces and support for mental health conversations, with the provision of mental health first aiders as key.

- Involve a more diverse range of people in influencing our strategies and decisions through our 'This is Me' groups and Inclusion Forum, to help us create a more inclusive culture.

- Recognise and celebrate achievement as individuals, teams, and an organisation.

- Create a culture of action around being more environmentally friendly and sustainable practices.

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Realising Potential

I am always learning and developing

We will:

- Continue the work we have started to develop an exciting learning and development offer for our people, with a mix of Campus on-line and face-to-face learning to facilitate the skills we need to deliver our services.

- Ensure learning and development is prioritised and results in business impact, by embedding a learning culture across the organisation.

- Undertake strategic workforce planning in teams to identify the talent we need for the future.

- Support the professional and personal development of our people, so that leaving us to develop a career elsewhere is seen as a last resort.

- Go on an exciting discovery of self- awareness in our teams through the 'Showing the Way' sessions that are being created to support the delivery of the Customer Strategy.

- Increase digital skills within the organisation, either through upskilling or recruitment.

- Be mindful of our mental capacity limits and work demands and aim to keep learning simple, bite-sized, and incremental where possible.

- Innovate in the way we attract talent to the organisation with inclusive recruitment practices that focus on diversity, younger generations, skills gaps, and future leadership.

- Develop and support innovative employment initiatives and programmes including volunteering, work experience and Project Search.

Trust in Leadership

I am a visible, positive role-model

We will:

- Lead through our values, with our leaders acting as role models for their people, demonstrating all our behaviours with equal importance.

- Have leaders that are visible in the workplace, getting out and about in their services to see what is happening in practice and listening to people and customers in order to truly understand what is going on.

- Make informed decisions based on sound judgement that considers the impact on others and balances looking after our people, our customers, and our business.

- Remain positive through challenge, focusing on what we can do and how far we have already come, supporting each other where we can.

- Be transparent in our communications, being realistic and honest about what we can and can't do, recognising when we get things wrong and that there will always be difficult conversations, with no easy answers.

- Know when we need to act decisively and quickly in a crisis situation, to provide the clarity and direction that is needed.

- Know when we need to take time to work together, involving the right people to deliver the best outcome.

- Embrace our diversity and inclusion strategy to develop a workplace where everyone feels safe to be themselves and bring their talents and lived experience to their work.

- Promote selfless leadership where we do the right thing in the service of others.

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5. How are we doing?

The critical success factors of the People Strategy are the outcomes we have agreed for the strategic objective: to create a place where people want to work now and in the future.

These are:

- Our people will be connected to our shared purpose and living our values.

- We will attract, develop and retain the talent we need to deliver our services.

- We will look after the wellbeing of our people so they can look after our customers.

- We will develop new ways of working that embrace digital technology and flexible working.

- We will be a diverse and inclusive organisation where people can bring their lived experience to their work.

These outcomes are key themes within the People Strategy, and we will measure the overall success of the Strategy using the Hive employee surveying platform. This platform is based around the 5 key workplace conditions required for employee experience to lead to high levels of engagement.

We have not set improvement targets for our engagement scores in recognition that maintaining engagement levels in the current climate will be significantly challenging in itself.

However, we use the employee net promoter score to compare ourselves to other originations who use the Hive platform and aim for our engagement index and category averages to remain above 7, which is classed as positive. We also aim for a 70% response rate in our annual survey which Hive recognise as an ideal response rate.

In addition to staff survey measures we have some KPI's (around sickness levels, labour turnover and workforce diversity), with targets, that provide ongoing indications of how we are doing.

Whilst the People Strategy has been developed for contracted employees, it is also relevant for others in our community of people such as volunteers and board members.

6. Related Documents

Corporate Plan 2022-25 – A new us

Step Further Framework

Our Shared Commitments

Code of Conduct

Customer Strategy

Diversity & Inclusion Strategy