

OUR LONDON SOCIAL COMMITTEE: CASE STUDY OF PEOPLE ENGAGEMENT IN ACTION

Fostering a thriving community and inclusive culture: the London social committee

The Ricardo London office's social committee started out informally in 2021 in response to the lived experiences of working during the pandemic. The overwhelming majority of people based in the London and Madrid offices are early careers professionals and during periods of lockdown, individuals were often living and working in one room in their shared house, away from family and friends, and experiencing feelings of isolation and separation from work colleagues. Once lockdown restrictions were lifted, there was a real need to bring people together and build a strong working culture, and a desire to focus that strong culture on improving lives in local communities through volunteering.

Supported with funding by the senior leadership team in 2022, dependent on consistent attendance at events in both offices, each month the social committee organises one to two events determined by the outcomes of regular surveys among the office teams. The committee will be supportive of any activities, so long as they are inclusive, and to date, the teams have taken part in bowling, sports, cinema-going and even creative arts – a recent art evening was attended by a least a third of people who do not usually attend office social gatherings.

Ella Wingard, Chair of the social committee said: "So many of our colleagues move to London or Madrid for their roles with Ricardo, and consequently, they do not have a solid support network of family and friends to sustain them through good times and bad. As a consequence, we work hard to make the offices inclusive. Every new office member is added to the London Office Lunch Chat so that they can start to make friends and share their hobbies and interests in a safe and supportive environment."

As well as supporting each other, the social committee is actively reaching out to improve lives in the wider community. During the past year, London office team members have undertaken litter picking along the banks of the River Thames, as part of a wider initiative led by the Port of London Authority to pick up, document and then use the insight to prevent similar litter being left in the future. The team in London also makes monthly donations to the North Paddington food bank and regularly goes into local schools and youth groups to talk about science, technology, engineering and maths careers, and even re-enact a COP event.

The social committee has grown and grown, now hosting events for as many as 50 people each month, with a thriving culture defined by highly engaged and supportive team members. Emma Gresswell, Deputy Chair of the social committee said: "Our activities help to break down barriers and give each one of us confidence that our voice can be heard in our community."