

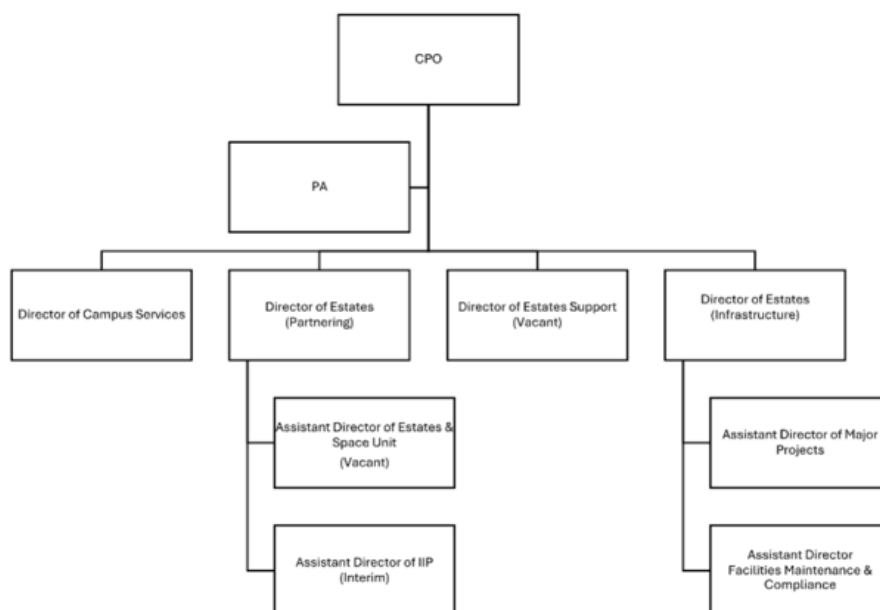
Meet the OPTIC leadership team

New and familiar faces are stepping into senior roles across Estates and Facilities, as the Directorate's new leadership structure takes shape.

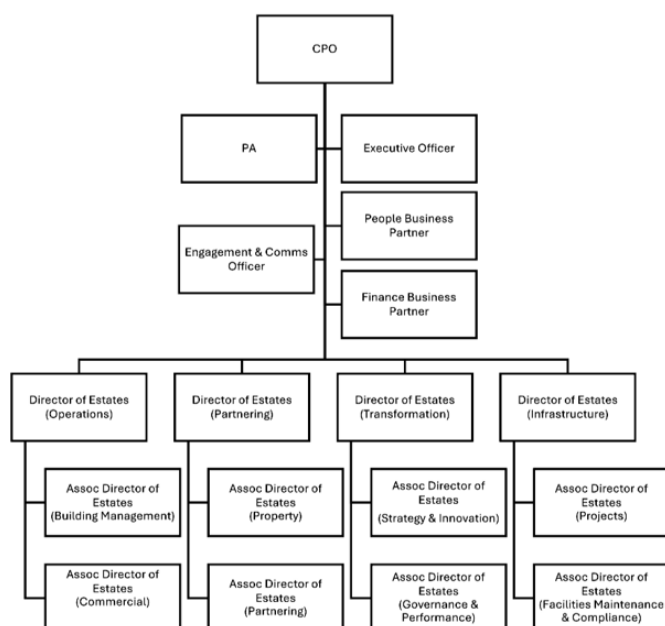
When Barra Mac Ruairí became Chief Property Officer, Estates and Facilities was running large, complex services with a very slim leadership team. Rather than change things straight away, Barra spent his first year getting to know the Directorate: who we are, what we do, and what we need to deliver Manchester 2035.

"I wanted to properly understand the Directorate as a whole before making any changes to how we lead," says Barra. "Over my first year, I observed and tested approaches, and then set out the OPTIC structure in June."

OPTIC stands for **O**perations, **P**artnering, **T**ransformation, **I**nfrastructure and the **C**PO's Office. Each area is led by a Director of Estates, supported by Associate Directors. The diagrams below show how the structure has changed since March 2025.



Leadership structure, March 2025



OPTIC leadership structure, June 2026

Welcoming new directors

Penny Gilyard joined us at the end of September as Director of Estates (Transformation), and Claire Twaites will join in the first week of January 2027 as Director of Estates (Operations). Penny and Claire join Matt Hill and Michelle Harper on the Estates and Facilities Senior Leadership Team.

New Associate Directors

Four colleagues are joining the Extended Leadership Team (ELT) Core group, which is made up of the Senior Leadership Team's direct reports:

- **Martin Blake**, currently Head of Estates Safety, becomes Associate Director of Estates (Governance & Performance) on 1 October.
- **Sharon Richardson**, currently Interim Associate Director of Estates (Infrastructure), becomes Associate Director of Estates (Strategy & Innovation) on 1 October.
- **Rob Dawes** joins us as Associate Director of Estates (Property) on 5 October.
- **Lai-Gar Sung** joins us as Associate Director of Estates (Commercial) on 1 December.

Julia Durkan, Lee Barlow and Martin Blake, who currently report to Barra, will now report to the Director of Estates (Transformation).

Changes in Campus Services

Alison Shedlock will retire from her role as Director of Campus Services on 1 October, but will be staying with us part-time as Strategic Advisor. She will support our incoming operational leaders and continue some important pieces of work for the Directorate.

The Director of Campus Services role is expanding to become Director of Estates (Operations), and Campus Security and Support stays within its portfolio. Phil Lord will act up as Director of Campus Services from 1 October until Claire arrives.

What it means for us

"This new structure is a serious strengthening of our leadership capacity," says Barra. "It will allow us all to get on and deliver the Estates and Facilities Directorate Plan and support our ambitious objectives for the future."

"It's an important time for the Directorate. We're welcoming new colleagues to build 'one team of teams', celebrating the progression of existing talent, and building on the strong foundations laid by everyone who has helped shape our success so far."

Over the coming issues, we'll be sitting down with our new leaders to find out more about them.