



Team Charter



creating inclusive environments in education
and employment for people with disabilities

Foreword

We embarked on developing this Charter in the Summer of 2022. As a Team we had recently experienced rapid changes as the organisation grew and introduced new roles, alongside adapting to remote and hybrid working. Because of that, it seemed like a good time to take stock and have some conversations about how we work together in this evolving landscape. The difficult experiences of trying to stay connected as a team through these shifts had reminded us that a strong team culture is something you have to talk about and develop, and involves having meaningful conversations and sometimes, difficult ones. So that's what we did.

Firstly, we developed a staff survey to gauge what people felt was good about our culture and work practices, and what could be better. This informed the development of a team consultation day facilitated by Organisational Change specialist Dr Loren Duffy in Aug 2022. All the arising input and dialogue gave us a real sense of who we are as individuals and how we fitted together as part of the Team. We realised how rewarding a place AHEAD was to work in lots of ways, but also, that we had a lot of work to do to make sure everyone felt valued and could work in an environment they can be at their best.



We made lots of immediate changes to organisational practices and supports as a result such as moving to a cloud-based filing system, and the introduction of the RACI model. A cross-team Charter Committee was put together to analyse the data from the survey and session outcomes, and develop it into a Team Charter over 6 months, with points of feedback and input along the way added by the wider team.

The Charter is really a description of what we are on our best days, but we're not at our best every day. We know that life doesn't work like that. They are ideals and practices we try to live up to, rather than something we expect everyone to uphold 100% of the time.

But we wanted this Charter to serve as a statement of intent. "This is what we are about here, and we expect people to be kind, be open, and be sound to each other". It serves to describe a place where AHEAD team members can be happy at work in their own skin and bring their talents to bear as individuals and as a collective.

We hope it acts as an ongoing reminder to all of us to play our part in creating that place.

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Aim of the Team Charter



This charter was created **by the AHEAD team** to collaboratively define the culture of how we work together. The ideals, behaviours & processes in the charter empower us to get the most from our work & each other, in order to be happy at work, work more effectively & collectively towards our greater mission...

‘to create inclusive environments in education & employment for people with disabilities’

Core Ideals Underpinning Our Teamwork



We **APPRECIATE & VALUE**
Each Other & Our Differences



We **COLLABORATE & COMMUNICATE** with Each Other



We **BACK UP & SHOW UP** for Each Other



We **REFLECT & CELEBRATE**
Each Other's Work

Structure of the Charter

Each Ideal in the Charter is Underpinned by:

WHY - statement which explains why this is a core team ideal

WHAT - behaviours which help us to live the ideal & understand what we expect from each other

HOW - processes & practices which support us to work together in line with the ideal



We APPRECIATE & VALUE Each Other & Our Differences

WHY is this important to us?

“Each individual staff member brings different strengths, challenges, disabilities, perspectives & experiences to the table.

When we appreciate and value all of the voices, skills, and experiences in our team, we are happier in our work, and we create high quality work that speaks to the diversity of our audience.”

WHAT behaviours are associated with this value.

We...

- Treat People Well
- Are Open to New Ways of Working
- See Difference as Strength
- Trust Each Other's Expertise

Treat People Well:

Because we appreciate our colleagues, we try to be kind to each other, & make effort to build positive relationships.

We check in personally with colleagues when we can and praise them when they achieve something.

Any feedback we give is delivered respectfully and constructively, and never in front of others unless they've asked for it.



Are Open to New Ways of Working:

Because we are all so different, we bring different viewpoints, needs, and ways of working into the team, and this is part of our strength.

We ensure everyone's ideas are heard and valued, even when we disagree.

When working with colleagues with a different working style, we discuss it & compromise to get the best result for all.



See Difference as Strength:

We see the diversity of our team as a key strength, so we appreciate all kinds of difference, and are ready to change our behaviour to be more inclusive of the needs and reasonable accommodations of other team members.

We try to create an atmosphere where colleagues can openly talk about what makes them different, but we don't pry unless they indicate its ok to ask.



Trust Each Other's Expertise:

We recognise that we all have different professional strengths, skills and expertise, and it's our collective work that brings us success.

That we aren't shy about consulting colleagues, asking for advice or help.

We also recognise that we have much to offer to our colleagues, so we offer to help and share our skills when we can, and this leads to a higher standard of work.

Managers also...

- Put People First
- Model Respectful Behaviour

Put People First:

We respect everyone has different energies, skills, disabilities & life demands, & we put people first.

That means we can't expect everyone to work at the same level of productivity all the time.

We recognise that it's the combination of all of us that make the difference, so we draft in team members to support others when they need flexibility.

Model Respectful Behaviour:

Managers help set the tone for team culture, so it's our job to lead by example.

This means celebrating difference, encouraging compromise, ensuring everyone gets a chance to contribute and feel heard, and empowering staff to take initiative in their roles.

If we see disrespectful behaviour within our teams, we address it quickly in line with AHEAD policy.





HOW – Processes and Practices that Can Support this Value.

We...

 **Bring Everyone Along With Us:**

We try to create an atmosphere where all inputs are valued, so we encourage colleagues to ask anything without embarrassment, and to feel comfortable putting forward new ideas.

We don't mind when our own ideas are not used because its all part of the process of getting a better result for the team.

We especially take time to 'bring along' new colleagues, by reaching out to welcome them, offer them support and let them know we're here to answer questions they have.

 **Discuss How to Work Best Together:**

Sometimes we can find it challenging to work with someone who thinks and works differently to us. Because we value all approaches, when this happens we are comfortable talking respectfully about the best ways to work together, exploring what processes, tools and company templates might help us to meet half way.

We...

 **Regularly Consult Each Other:**

We take regular opportunities to reach out to colleagues with expertise and skills that can add value to the work we are responsible for. We see it as a strength to value our colleagues and seek their input.

This can be as simple as asking a quick question about something small on a Teams call/chat, or arranging a coffee with a colleague to talk something through (be explicit what its about). Or, it could involve adding an agenda item to a team brainstorming meeting or asking your manager if a colleague can work more deeply with you on a project. But, we recognise that colleagues won't always be in a position to help, so we aren't offended when they say they can't right now.

Sometimes people can feel unappreciated if we don't consult them – like if we take a meeting which could be seen to relate to their role without letting them know. So, we think before we act, & we apologise when we get it wrong. When it happens to us, we accept apologies & move on.





Managers also...

- Create Spaces for Social Connection
- intervene Early When Problems Arise

 **Create Spaces for Social Connection:**

We create social opportunities for our team to build relationships (organising lunch, drinks) because we recognise that when teams are 'close', they are happier and more willing to help each other at work. But we recognise social events are not for everyone and are explicit that no pressure is felt to attend.

 **Intervene Early When Problems Arise:**

If we sense that there is conflict brewing or a lack of respect demonstrated between colleagues, we try to address it early, and support staff to compromise and work out their differences. However, if informal dialogue can't solve it, we familiarise ourselves with the AHEAD disciplinary process, because we understand that disrespectful behaviour cannot be tolerated – it's a threat to our good team culture.



We **COLLABORATE & COMMUNICATE** with Each Other

WHY is this important to us?

When we combine the diverse range of perspectives and skills in the organisation, we create a higher standard of work that benefits and reflects the people we serve.

Having a collaborative culture where we communicate clearly and effectively helps us to do that, and makes us all more confident in our roles.

WHAT behaviours are associated with this value.

We...

- Work Individually for the Collective
- Share Our Skills & Expertise
- Provide Clarity & Ask for It
- Keep Our Colleagues Informed



Work Individually for the Collective:

As individuals, we bring different professional strengths, skills and expertise, to the table, but it's our collective impact that helps us to work effectively towards our mission. Because we are passionate about our work, we feel connected to our projects, but we make sure that we are not too protective when things need to change as the organisation does.

Share Our Skills & Expertise:

The huge range of expertise and skills in the organisation means we are always learning from each other. That's why we regularly ask for input/advice from other colleagues and offer to provide input where our expertise can help. When it seems appropriate, we offer to show our colleagues a new skill or talk them through a new concept to help them develop.

Provide Clarity & Ask for It:

In a dynamic environment like AHEAD, with such a diverse team, it's easy for wires to get crossed. So, when we are working with colleagues on something, we seek to be as clear as possible about goals, tasks and roles. Equally, we are comfortable asking for clarity from our colleagues and managers when we are unclear.

Keep Our Colleagues Informed:

We ensure to keep our managers well informed about project developments, especially when issues arise, and we run new ideas by them. We keep the team posted about our work, and make a special effort to keep those who have inputted to a project up to date. Doing this means the team stays informed and everyone feels valued.

Managers also...

- Model Open Communication
- Grant Autonomy & Initiative

Model Open Communication:



We communicate openly and honestly as appropriate with our teams about the direction of the organisation and work plan. We encourage staff to raise concerns and ask questions at meetings, and we seek to create a 'no blame' culture where staff feel they can admit mistakes and learn from them. We don't mind being challenged respectfully.

Grant Autonomy & Initiative:

We empower staff to be the best they can be in their roles, and provide opportunities to develop. This means giving them autonomy, but in return, we expect to be kept well informed. We use 1 to 1s to explore progress, give input, and provide clarity about what meetings/decisions we want to be included in and what staff can go ahead with.

HOW – Processes and Practices that Can Support this Value.

We...

- 
Use the RACI* model:
 Using the well established RACI (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed) model to clarify roles within projects means staff are more confident and understand what they have to do and who they have to involve. RACI can be used at the project level, and even at the task level within projects to assign responsibility and improve clarity.
- 
Work Through Disagreements:
 When a clash of personality or working style emerges with a colleague, we accept shared responsibility. We try to raise the issue respectfully with them, compromise and work through it, before bringing it to our managers, and we try not to get offended when colleagues raise stuff with us. Equally, we try to work constructively with our managers if they get involved to support a resolution.



Brainstorm to Tap in to Expertise:

Collective input is core to our success, so when we are responsible for a project, we take opportunities to brainstorm project ideas and take on board the expertise of our team. Often we do this early in the project at dedicated meetings so that we can then get on with the work we are responsible for. Using brainstorming meetings helps to bring your whole team along with you in the project you are responsible for, and allow them have input in a time-efficient way.

Managers also...

- Include the Team in Decision Making
- Ensure the Right People are Involved



Include the Team in Decision Making:

We take regular input from the team about the direction of the organisation and the work plan, and seek to arrive at collective decisions when appropriate. Be honest with them when you can about which ideas are possible and provide rationale for final decisions made. Its especially important to include staff in decision making relating to changes in their roles, taking on their ideas and concerns privately before acting.

**Ensure the Right People are Involved:**

Part of the role of the manager is to ensure that the range of skills, expertise and resources in the team are contributing to the right projects and tasks. Examples of how to do that include using the RACI model to provide clarity about who is responsible, and who should be consulted and informed, and more informally, encouraging information sharing and collaboration in 1 to 1s – “you should run that by X before you do Y”.



We **BACK UP & SHOW UP** for Each Other

WHY is this important to the AHEAD Team?

We care about each other and we are invested in the work of AHEAD, so when things get challenging, we all chip in to back each other up.

This helps us to create the best work we can in tough situations and achieve the best outcomes for our mission.”

WHAT behaviours are associated with this value.

We...

- Check In with Each Other
- Have Each Other's Backs
- Pitch In
- Don't Blame - Mistakes Happen



Check-in With Each Other:

Because we care about our team mates, we check in with each other and make time for personal catch ups. We make a special effort to reach out to colleagues and see how they are doing if we think they are having a hard time or feeling stressed. However, if it feels someone doesn't want to share, we don't push it.

Have Each Other's Backs:

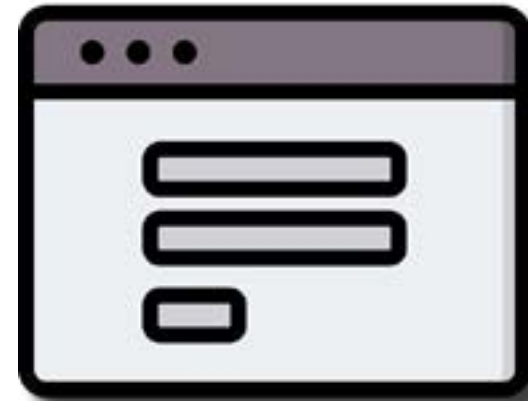
Absences can happen for many reasons and we recognise its important that people put their health first, so we work together to cover for colleagues when they are sick or have other life demands impacting them. Equally, when we notice that a colleague seems overstretched & we have a lighter load, we offer to help where we can & share the load.

Pitch-In:

When big projects and events are running in one Team, the rest of the teams offer to pitch in and support. Because we all have the same aim of making it a success, we accept whatever role we are given and do it as best we can. We are proactive in providing support on the day of events and put our hands up to assist the team in tackling issues that arise.

Don't Blame - Mistakes Happen:

We see making mistakes as a normal part of work, and recognise our aim is to learn from mistakes. That's why when we're working with colleagues and they mess up, we don't blame. Instead we say 'don't worry about it' and talk about how we can do it better next time. We create a blame-free environment by being honest about when we get things wrong too.



Managers also...

- Respond to Circumstances
- Demonstrate a Team Mentality

Respond to Circumstances:

AHEAD has a really diverse team with different life demands and disabilities, and the external environment we operate in means things are always changing. As managers, when changes in circumstances mean that team members are unavailable or overloaded, we respond quickly by pulling in support from others and rejigging the work plan.

Demonstrate a Team Mentality:

The onus is on managers to set the tone for the team dynamic, and that means modelling the supportive nature and 'pitch in' behaviour we expect from our Teams. That means that no task is too small for us to take on when supporting the team, especially when team circumstances change and a big team effort is required to fill gaps and succeed.



HOW – Processes and Practices that Can Support this Value.

We...



Pick Up the Slack:

When our colleagues are struggling with deadlines for unavoidable reasons, or are out sick in a busy week for the team, we offer to dig in and help out in any way we can.

We recognise that this might mean pausing or postponing something we think is important in order to support the wider team goals, but we communicate our support to managers so they can coordinate the collective effort to fill any gaps.

Because we understand the importance of meeting our own work goals deadlines, and how that impacts on others in the team, we are honest and open with our managers about when we need help and support to reach them, and know that the gesture will be returned over time.



✔ Show Kindness and Empathy:

We try to create a caring environment to work in by engaging in small acts of kindness to our colleagues, and by showing empathy for their struggles when they are finding it tough. This can be through simple things like bringing them a coffee, marking their birthday with a card or a nice email message, or offering them to go for a walk and a chat if they seem low. Equally, if it seems like they want to be left be, we don't try to force them to engage.



✔ Engage in Mentoring and Coaching:

We value mentoring as a way to support each other. That's why when we are asked to mentor new colleagues as part of AHEAD's induction procedures, we jump at the chance. Equally, if mentoring or coaching from outside the organisation is suggested to us as part of our performance and development process, we give it fair consideration.

Managers also...

- Respond to Circumstances
- Demonstrate a Team Mentality

✔ Encourage Asking for Support:

We create a supportive culture by signalling regularly at meetings that "its ok to ask for help if you are overstretched". If we are comfortable with it, we communicate in team meetings when we are overstretched and we ask for support from team members. We check in regularly on workload in 1-to-1s, highlighting that we can make a plan to support staff if issues arise. We regularly signpost the Employee mental health supports available to normalise seeking support.

✔ Make Time for Casual Chat:

We always start team meetings by checking in with our teams how they are doing and we create time for casual chit chat and conversations about non work related topics.





We **REFLECT & CELEBRATE** Each Other's Work

WHY is this important to the AHEAD Team?

We achieve a huge amount in AHEAD, but things move so fast that we need to make time and a conscious effort to reflect on what we did well and what we can do better.

This helps us to feel proud of what we've done, create better work going forward, and develop in our roles.

WHAT behaviours are associated with this value.

We...

- Are Open to Learning
- Congratulate Our Colleagues
- Give Each Other Credit
- Build in Focus and Thinking Time

Are Open to Learning:

Individually and collectively, we are always trying to learn from our experiences to create better work in future and develop our skills. So, we seek feedback from our managers and evaluate our projects/events with the team. Because we often learn most from our mistakes, we don't mind when colleagues give constructive feedback when invited.

Congratulate Our Colleagues:

We know that it feels good to be acknowledged when we achieve good work, so we make a conscious effort to congratulate our colleagues when they complete a big project or event successfully. We also ensure we acknowledge the ongoing work of colleagues with more 'unseen' roles in the organisation because we know its important.

Give Each Other Credit:

We recognise how important the input of different voices and perspectives on the team is to creating our best work, and that we're often building on the work of other colleagues. That's why we're intentional about giving credit to colleagues who've made a contribution to the work we are responsible for.



Build in Focus and Thinking Time:

AHEAD can be a busy and fast moving environment, and meeting-free time is hard to come by. But we know that space to think (individually and as a team) and focus is vital to producing quality work. That's why we schedule calendar time in for uninterrupted focus when we need it, and know not to disturb when other colleagues do the same.

Managers also...

- Provide Constructive Feedback
- Celebrate Wins

Provide Constructive Feedback:

We recognise that staff need to be both praised for what they have done well, and given constructive feedback about what can go better next time, and where there is room for development. We ensure we are tactful when giving feedback, that we do it in private unless its invited by them, and that feedback is development focussed.

Celebrate Wins:

Because we are busy, its easy to just complete a big project and move on to the next one. However as managers, we need to mark our collective achievement and effort by dedicating time to reflecting on it and celebrating it. This helps to instil collective pride in our work and build greater connection to the team and our mission.

HOW – Processes and Practices that Can Support this Value.

We...

**Conduct Evaluation:**

Because we believe in learning from experiences in the projects/events we are responsible for, we coordinate evaluation processes to capture feedback and reflect on them. Processes often include formal surveys of participants, and more informal 'listen and learn' debriefs with the team. Typically this information is documented in company evaluation templates and actionable future changes are agreed between those responsible and their managers.

**Vocalise a Job Well Done:**

We aim to create a culture of open recognition for the good work of colleagues. We do that informally by praising work at team and staff meetings, dropping messages into private and group channels in Teams, and calling out the contribution of colleagues in public speaking settings.





Review Work Plans as a Team:

As a team, we periodically review the visual Gantt chart style work plans we create, to reflect on progress, see what has been achieved, what new items need to be added or removed (where plans have changed), and look forward to the next period. While we recognise our managers typically organise these review sessions, we take ongoing responsibility for checking progress of the projects we are overseeing against the projected timelines, and keep our managers informed if we see issues arising.

Managers also...

- Use the P&D System
- Create Spaces for Celebration



Use the P&D System:

The performance and development system offers a key mechanism to give constructive feedback, encourage reflection, and support colleagues to develop as professionals. This 2-way dialog between staff member and manager is development orientated and should lead to opportunity for growth, and improved outcomes. It is important that while the process is annual, the goals are informally reviewed on at least a quarterly basis.



Create Spaces for Celebration:

We recognise that we need to be intentional about creating spaces to celebrate our collective work and create opportunity for team members to praise each other. That's why we occasionally create structured exercises which invite praise and reflection on success (sometimes using jamboard, padlet etc). We also bring the team for celebratory lunches to mark key milestones in collective projects, and our annual summer team building event offers the whole team to celebrate the work documented in the annual report.



TEAM CHARTER ahead



We Appreciate & Value Each Other & Our Differences



We Collaborate & Communicate with Each Other



We Back Up & Show Up For Each Other



We Reflect & Celebrate Each Other's Work

| TEAM CHARTER IDEALS | WE APPRECIATE & VALUE | WE COLLABORATE & COMMUNICATE | WE BACK UP & SHOW UP | WE REFLECT & CELEBRATE |
|---|---|---|--|---|
| WHY is this important? | “When we appreciate and value all of the voices, skills, and experiences in our team, we are happier in our work, and we high quality work that speaks to the diversity of our audience.” | “Having a collaborative culture where we communicate clearly and effectively helps us to create a stronger body of work, and makes us all more confident in our roles.” | “When things get challenging, we all chip in to back each other up. This helps us to create the best work we can in tough situations and achieve the best outcomes for our mission.” | “Reflecting on what we did well and what we can do better, and celebrating our achievements helps us to feel proud of what we've done, create better work going forward, and develop in our roles.” |
| WHAT behaviours are associated with the ideal. S = all staff M = managers | WE Treat People Well See Difference as a Strength Are Open to New Ways of Working Trust Each Other's Expertise Put People First Model Respectful Behaviour | WE Work Individually for the Collective Share Our Skills & Expertise Provide Clarity & Ask for It Keep Our Colleagues Informed Model Open Communication Grant Autonomy & Initiative | WE Check in with Each Other Have Each Other's Backs Pitch In Don't Blame – Mistakes Happen Respond to Circumstances Demonstrate a Team Mentality | WE Are Open to Learning Congratulate Our Colleagues Give Each Other Credit Build in Focus and Thinking Time Provide Constructive Feedback Celebrate Wins |
| HOW practices and processes that help us live the ideal. | WE Regularly Consult Each Other Bring Everyone Along with Us Discuss How to Work Best Together Create Spaces for Social Connection Intervene Early When Problems Arise | WE Use the RACI Model Brainstorm to Tap in to Expertise Work Through Disagreements Include the Team in Decision Making Ensure the Right People are Involved | WE Pick Up The Slack Show Kindness and Empathy Engage in Mentoring and Coaching Encourage Asking for Support Make Time for Casual Chat | WE Conduct Evaluation Review Work Plans as a Team Vocalise a Job Well Done Use the P & D System Create Spaces for Celebration |

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