

People First Charter Welcome Pack



People First Charter



Welcome

Thank you for signing up to the Association of Consultancy and Engineering People First Charter, joining companies from across the built environment who are demonstrating the importance of putting their people first.

When we talk to our members, one of the key challenges facing them is the skills shortage, and problems attracting and retaining talent. Therefore at ACE, one of our organisational themes is based on people, and our 2025 ambition is “a reliable and diverse talent pool to serve the future needs of our industry.” Key milestones in our journey are:

1. Build an evidence-based horizon scanning report and a subsequent proactive talent management programme.
2. Continue to raise the voice of inclusion, highlighting underrepresented communities, the benefits of diversity in the workplace, and nurturing a commitment to cultural improvement.
3. Positively showcase the sector as a ‘destination industry’ – a diverse, welcoming and innovative place to work and thrive.

In 2022, we launched a new Equity, Diversity and Inclusion campaign called Building Inclusivity, and have brought together experts, emerging professionals and industry leaders to discuss the barriers to creating inclusive workplaces and learn from each other about solutions that have impact.

The launch of the People First Charter is the next step in our journey as we look to collaborate more widely, support companies with continuous improvement, and share best practice. We are pleased that you have committed to support our industry to put people first.

Stephen Marcos Jones



People First Charter

Introduction (including benefits)

According to the Institution of Engineering and Technology Engineering Kids Futures report, there is currently a shortfall of over 173,000 workers in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) sectors.

The skills shortage is regularly cited as one of the biggest challenges for our member organisations, and one which we cannot solve on our own. Through collaboration we can.

The UK's engineering sector is considerably less diverse than the general population, meaning many groups are underrepresented in the workforce. With diversity of talent, comes the diversity of thought that is needed to solve the world's biggest challenges and drive the innovations of the future.

16.5% female, 11.4% ethnic minority, (Engineering UK – Trends in the engineering workforce between 2010 and 2021)

Introduction to the Charter Guiding Principles



Inclusivity of All

- Bringing your whole self to work
- What you know not who you know
- Diversity & equity
- Inclusive leadership



Openness and respect

- Regular balanced feedback
- Wellbeing matters
- Effective communication
- Clear goals and KPI
- Purposeful contribution to the workplace and wider society



Development and Growth

- Provide opportunities to grow with a multifaceted approach
- Lattice and linear opportunities
- New entry & existing development opportunities
- Skills for life



Recognition

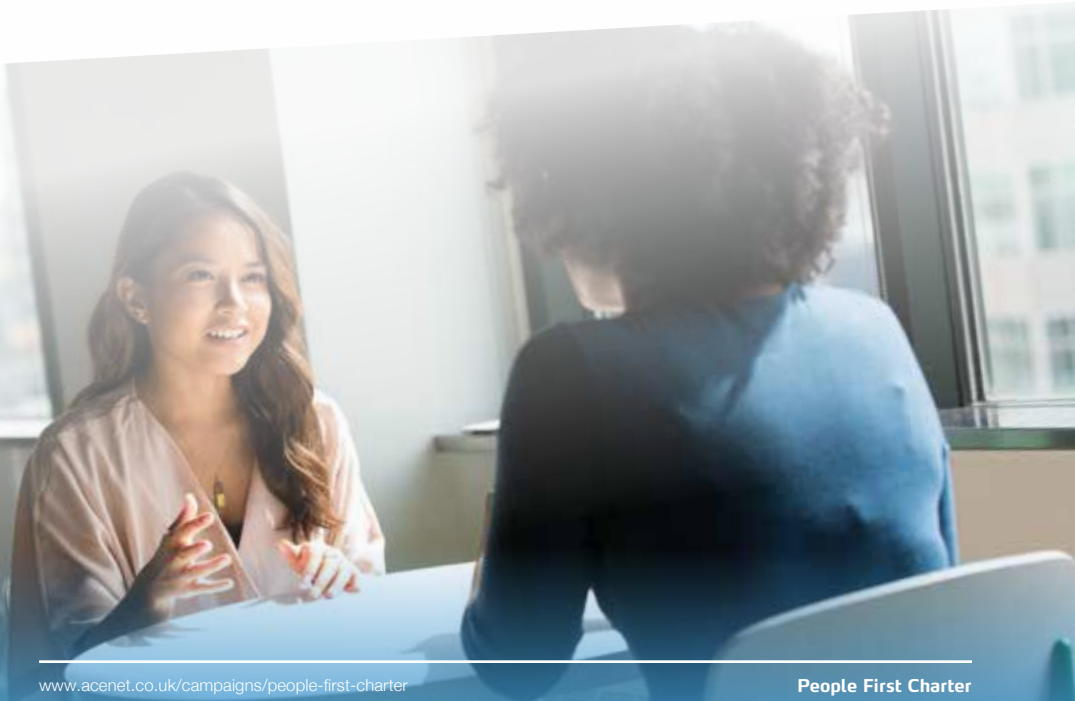
- Celebrating the contribution made to the business
- Recognising the contribution made to the future sustainability of the sector/ world
- Encouraging collaboration across the industry

People First Charter

The 8 commitments (guidance, expectations, case studies)

By signing the People First Charter you have pledged to:

- Appoint a member of the senior leadership team as a 'People First Champion'
- Participate in the Building Inclusivity campaign as an active sponsor for change
- Agree an action plan, monitor and report on progress made under the 4 guiding principles
- Actively demonstrate the provision of opportunities for training and education of employees, supporting the progression of diverse individuals into senior roles
- Place the wellbeing of employees at the heart of the organisation
- Create a culture that fosters inclusion and provides a safe space for all employees to talk openly, including at industry events and in meetings
- Create transparent people policies and processes that are accessible and attractive to everyone.
- Proactively and continuously seek opportunities to recognise and celebrate individual and whole sector successes



People First Charter

Guidance notes

Below are examples of behaviour and actions which, as a signatory company, you may choose to implement to work towards achieving your commitments. These are merely indicative as the People First Charter recognises the diversity of our sector and that organisations are diverse in size and nature and will also have different starting points. For instance, many organisations already have good people policies and are involved in other people-related initiatives. The People First Charter is not intended to replace or conflict with these but to compliment them. It also represents a public commitment to good practice that is specific to the built environment industry. As a signatory company, you should therefore set your own expectations and implement the right strategy for your own organisation, including any targets as appropriate.

1) Appoint a member of the senior leadership team as a 'People First Champion'

The aim of the People First Charter is to embed inclusive people policies into the culture of your organisation, and to do this, it needs to be championed from a senior level. The People First Champion will ideally be a member of your board or the senior leadership team.

The role of the People First Champion will be to lead and be accountable for – in conjunction with the organisation's executive team and business leaders – the organisations efforts to achieving the Charter commitments.

2) Participate in the Building Inclusivity campaign as an active sponsor for change

Building Inclusivity is the cross-industry equity, diversity and inclusion campaign from ACE and EIC which aims to help members create more inclusive workspaces, ensuring the opportunity for both meeting skills shortages and retaining talent is seized. It brings together experts, emerging professionals and industry leaders to discuss the barriers to create an inclusive workspace. We expect signatories to participate in at least 2 workshops or knowledge sharing sessions per year.

3) Agree an action plan, monitor and report on progress made under the 4 guiding principles

Creating a people first culture requires an ongoing commitment to ensure it is embedded throughout the organisation. We expect signatory companies to produce a bespoke action plan which demonstrates their approach to continuous improvement under the 4 guiding principles.

A good starting point would be to assess your organisation's current culture, this could be by carrying out a confidential employee survey, for example. Understand the data that you currently hold and analyse it to see where your areas of focus might be. Highlight the current people first initiatives you already have in place, and where possible the positive impact that they are having, as well as any areas for improvement. Identify and understand any barriers to attraction, progression and retention.

By understanding your baseline, you can then create your action plan. The best plans link into the overall business plan: what are you trying to achieve as an organisation and how can your people first plan help you achieve that. Set out your company's people first vision, mission and objectives. Then create a clear plan of how you will achieve them, ensure clear accountability, timescales, and impact measures for all your initiatives.

People First Charter

The people first action plan should be monitored on a regular basis and amended as necessary to continually progress.

There is an expectation that signatories submit an annual case study to the ACE which demonstrates the charter in action at their workplace, these will highlight successes and best practice to showcase the work of your organisation on our Building Inclusivity web pages.

ACE will require a two-yearly report from signatories detailing how they have been continuously working towards the 8 commitments they have signed up to under the People First Charter. This will be reviewed by ACE and feedback provided.

Reporting on progress will help support the transparency and accountability needed to drive positive change within your company and our industry

4) Actively demonstrate the provision of opportunities for training and education of employees, support the progression of underrepresented employees into senior roles

Continuous learning opportunities boost employee retention by providing professional development and career advancement opportunities. These opportunities can also increase employee engagement when continuous learning is tied directly into the work process by making work more interesting and fulfilling. Signatories should have a clear training and development plan to ensure that access is fair to all employees, and consideration has been given to all employees' individual needs. Organisations should consider how support is given for employees from underrepresented groups to progress in your organisation.

5) Place the wellbeing of employees at the heart of the organisation

Employee wellbeing refers to the state of employees' mental and physical health, resulting from dynamics within – and sometimes outside – the workplace.

It is more important now than ever before to ensure the wellbeing of employees is at the heart of every organisation's culture, to protect the health of their workforce and ultimately the success of your business.

Employee wellbeing is not just about perks and benefits, but also covers workload, leadership styles, communication and a supportive environment. The Health and Safety Executive has defined six main areas of work-related stress – demands, control, support, relationships, role and change. Signatories should demonstrate how they are focusing on employee wellbeing in their workplaces.

6) Create a culture that fosters inclusion and provides a safe space for all employees to talk openly

At the core of an inclusive culture is a company's ability to foster a sense of community and belonging in which all employees feel that they can be themselves and play an integral part in the company's life and progress.

Signatory companies are invited to encourage and listen to the ideas developed by employees to foster equity, diversity and inclusion within their business and create a culture that gives leaders and managers accountability for strengthening diversity and ensuring every employee is given a platform to express themselves and thrive. Leaders should create inclusive environments within the workplace, but also at wider industry events.

People First Charter

This can be achieved by including initiatives in your People First action plan that recognise and celebrate your workforce's different styles, skills and background. This could include diversity and inclusion education sessions, encouraging employees to become active allies.

Companies may also set up executive sponsored diversity employee networks and ensure there is a standing agenda item at each executive committee meeting to discuss the progress of equity, diversity and inclusion across the organisation.

7) Create transparent people policies and processes that are accessible and attractive to everyone.

Workplace transparency is proven to breed long-term success. Implemented properly, increased transparency creates trust between employers and employees, helps improve morale, lowers job-related stress while increasing employee happiness and boosting performance.

Organisations can create transparency in people policies and processes throughout the entire employee lifecycle from recruitment and hiring, performance management and career development through to exiting the company.

Within the action plan, there are a number of initiatives that could be included and this would be dependent on where the company's starting point is. For example, a review of your recruitment process might highlight improvements that could be made in advertising to diverse groups, in ensuring diverse interview panels, or using recruitment firms that have a clear focus on EDI.

Signatories should consider how their people policies impact different groups of people, for example, are they accessible for people with differing needs, do they ensure no-one is disadvantaged unfairly.

8) Proactively and continuously seek opportunities to recognise and celebrate individual and whole sector successes

A key way to retain employees is to show them appreciation for their ongoing work. This might be a job well done, a difficult situation handled well, or having a positive impact on someone else. Remember when celebrating that not all employees will appreciate a big showy gesture, others might prefer a private note, or a quick conversation.

Individual, team and company successes can also be celebrated through rewards and awards. When considering these it is important to ensure the process is fair, and the rewards are inclusive and suitable for those receiving them. Remember to think about little and often when it comes to recognition.

We would also encourage signatories to nominate for a "People First" award at the ACE awards.

People First Charter

Measuring impact

The above are examples of actions that, as a signatory company, you may want to implement to promote a people first culture. These are merely indicative, and progress will vary depending on your organisation's resources and starting points.

The People First Charter's primary focus is on continuous improvement. To ensure companies are continually improving they must track progress and impact, and adjust their action plan in accordance with their progress. Some examples of how to track progress are detailed below:

- Employee demographic data
- Employee engagement surveys
- Learning and development data
- Community impact feedback
- Internal mobility rate
- Employee turnover
- Absenteeism rate



People First Charter

Next steps

ACE will encourage a people first culture across the industry, continuing to build on the ACE Building Inclusivity campaign.

Amongst other things, we will be creating a People First Charter Community, regular newsletters, sharing of best practice and an annual report highlighting signatories success stories.

All signatories will be expected to submit a two-yearly report detailing how they have been working towards achieving their aims against the 8 commitments of the People First Charter. ACE will review this report and provide feedback. This is a requirement to continue being a part of the People First Charter.

People First Charter Community

ACE will set up a signatory companies' database and mailing list, including details of each organisation's People First Champion.

This database will be used for all People First Charter correspondence going forward, including the sharing of information, resources, guidance notes, presentations, training material and events which may help signatory companies create a people first workplace.

Annual People First Charter Report

The aim of the People First Charter is to encourage signatory companies to take pro-active steps to improve the people first culture within their organisation and consequently the built environment industry.

We accept that not all signatory companies will be able to make the same commitments and that the time and resources available to each signatory company will vary significantly. However, we will encourage all participating organisations to be open about their progress.

Every year, ACE will reach out to each signatory company to ask if they would like to provide details of any best practice, case studies and success stories they are proud of and which they would like to share with the EDI Charter Community for the benefit of all.

ACE will review and select the most inspirational stories and showcase them in an annual report which will be made available industry wide.

Access to helpline for general advice

ACE have set up a helpline for signatories to contact for general advice on their People First journey. Contact us at peoplefirst@acenet.co.uk

Further support

Sharon Slinger from Constructing Rainbows www.constructingrainbows.co.uk has been supporting ACE with the People First Charter and she has offered her diversity and inclusion services to signatories at a reduced rate. Contact her for more details on sharon@constructingrainbows.co.uk