

Inclusive Language Policy

How we communicate is foundational for creating a welcoming and inclusive workplace.

General

Since our founding in 2016 we've developed into a team of 45+ wonderfully diverse people.

It's our job to create a work environment where Charlini's feel they can bring every part of themselves to work. We need this diversity to build better products, make Charlie a better place to work and because it's the right thing to do.

This policy aims to highlight how we can use language to avoid biases, prevent the exclusion of groups and individuals and create a workspace we're all proud of.

There is no one-size-fits-all and the below steps simply give us the best starting point for being inclusive and welcoming, ultimately it's for the person or group we're speaking to or about, to direct how they'd like to be acknowledged.

We'll share some key principles to help guide you and then dive into more specific examples.

6 overall inclusive language principles:

- **Put people first:** Default to person-first constructions that put the person ahead of their characteristics, e.g., instead of "a blind man" or "a female engineer," use "a man who is blind" or "a woman on our engineering team." People-first language keeps the individual as the most essential element; there is more to each of us than our descriptors. Mention characteristics like gender, sexual orientation, religion, racial group or ability only when relevant to the discussion.
- **Avoid idioms, jargons, and acronyms:** Jargon and acronyms can exclude people who may not have specialised knowledge of a particular subject and prevent effective communication as a result
- **When speaking about disability, avoid phrases that suggest victimhood,** e.g. "afflicted by," "victim of," "suffers from," "confined to a wheelchair". Try to steer clear of euphemisms like "challenged," "differently abled," or "specially-abled," too
- **Don't underplay the impact of mental disabilities.** Terms like "bipolar," "OCD" and "ADD" are descriptors of real psychiatric disabilities that people actually possess. They are not metaphors for everyday behaviours. Also, avoid derogatory terms that stem from the context of mental health, for example, "crazy," "mad," "schizo," or "psycho."
- **"Guys" is not gender neutral.** "The "universal male" (i.e., using "guys" to mean "people") assumes that the normal, default human being is male. "Although "guys" and "man" are said to be neutral, numerous studies show that these words cause people specifically to think of males. Instead look to use terms like "Folks" or "Everyone".
- **If you're not sure, ask!** Let's all try our best to include language that reflects peoples' choice and style in how they talk about themselves.

Age

Only mention age if it's relevant, for example when discussing an age group in a data set.

Aim to avoid ageist terms such as:

- Elderly
- OAPs

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- Pensioners
- Youngsters

And opt for more objective terms such such as:

- Child
- Teenager
- Young people/adults
- Adults
- Over 65's, Over 75's etc.

Disability

Avoid defining people by their disability and using negative language like:

- Wheelchair-bound
- Handicapped
- Suffering from ""
- Victim of ""
- Able-bodied
- Cripple, invalid

And instead, put the person before the disability and negate negative connotations by using terms like:

- Person with a disability
- People living with ""
- Wheelchair user

Mental health

We talk about mental health very openly at Charlie with processes such as Personal Days, but it's easy to slip into unhelpful language and terminology.

Avoid defining people by their mental health conditions and adopt a people-focused approach, using terms like:

- People with anxiety
- A person with depression
- A person with a mental health condition

Charlie is committed to:

And avoid derogative language such as:

- Crazy
- Mad

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- Schizo
- Psycho

And let's not underplay mental health by using real psychiatric disabilities as everyday terms such:

- OCD
- ADHD
- ADD

Race and Ethnicity

We appreciate race means something different to everyone, however, we'll define it for the purpose of this policy as; one of the groups humans are divided into often based on common physical traits and shared history.

The same goes for ethnicity but again we'll define it as; more often chosen by a person rather than placed on them by society, often a cultural expression describing shared cultural norms and national identifiers such as language.

Only refer to someone's race or ethnicity if it's relevant to a conversation. Here are some examples we recommend for when we need to acknowledge and refer to ethnicity:

- Broad ethnicity: Black, Asian and White (rather than Caucasian), written in upper case
- Specific ethnicity: Black African, Chinese, Indian , White British, written in upper case

We avoid defining groups or ethnicities as minorities – in the words of Prince; "There's nothing minor about us". Using terms like ethnic minority can belittle and entrench biases toward people. Instead when we refer to ethnic groups, except White British, let's use the term underrepresented ethnicities. It's more about a lack of representation than a lack of folks from that ethnic group.

Sex and gender identity

Sex and gender are often used interchangeably but they're two different concepts. We'll share a couple of definitions for the purpose of this policy.

Sex will be defined as; the biological aspects of an individual as determined by their anatomy, which is produced by their chromosomes, hormones and their interactions.

Gender will be defined as; a social construction relating to behaviours and attributes based on labels of masculinity and femininity; gender identity is a personal perception, so the gender someone identifies with may not match the sex they were assigned at birth.

We avoid including or mentioning someone's sex or gender unless it's relevant to the context and we avoid assuming a person's gender.

We need to set norms at Charlie that make everyone feel comfortable. If you feel comfortable add your pronoun to your email signature and slack profile to make it easier for folks to respect and be aware of peoples' pronouns and to make the language more colloquial.

When you meet a new Charlini, again if you feel comfortable, mention your pronouns when you're introducing yourself. We appreciate this might seem a little awkward but it will quickly become routine and creates a really welcoming environment for new starters.

We expect Charlini's to respect and use the pronouns that folks identify as.

Please check out this helpful [Guide to Understanding Gender Identity Terms](#) from NPR — it gives definitions of common gender terms and some great, actionable ways to approach gender at work.

Sexual orientation

Sexual orientation relates to who someone feels romantically and/or emotionally attracted to. At Charlie we celebrate and embrace all forms of love and connection and we treat everyone with the same respect regardless of sexual orientation.

It's our job to make Charlie the most inclusive and welcoming place for everyone. We do this through simple things like celebrating Pride and bigger acts such as creating inclusive Parental and Miscarriage Policies.

We only talk about someones sexual orientation when it's relevant to the conversation. For example the People Operations Team might ask job candidates to share their sexual orientation to ensure we're reaching a diverse enough pool of people.

Religion

Once again we only refer to someone's religion if it's relevant to the conversation or context. We don't make assumptions about someone's religion based on their place of birth or their appearance.

We love and respect it when members of the team share their religious celebrations and holy days with the wider team — we've had some great moments of connection here, for example during Ramadan where the team came together to celebrate and even participate in events regardless of their religion.

Finally, a couple of religious-related language pointers:

- Use the term first name, forename or given name, not Christian name
- Use the uppercase when writing the names of religions
- When talking about members of a religion please treat them as a community, for example Member of the Jewish Community, Member of the Muslim Community

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