



**THINK
AHEAD**

External Relations Officer – Policy and Public Affairs

Job Pack

12 September 2024

Mo
Think Ahead
Social Worker

External Relations Officer – Policy and Public Affairs: Job Pack

Applying to Think Ahead

Thank you for downloading this information pack. We're delighted you're interested in joining us as the External Relations Officer – Policy and Public Affairs.

This pack contains all the information you will need to apply, including:

- The job overview and person specification.
- Timelines and information on how to apply.
- The legal bits, including our terms and conditions.

You'll find our head office careers site also has useful information for you, such as advice on how to complete your application, the application process, and FAQs. To view our careers site, please visit <https://www.work-for-thinkahead.org/>.

The deadline for this application is 30 September 2024 at 9am, and we cannot accept any late applications. Please apply here: <https://www.work-for-thinkahead.org/vacancies>.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

Improving our diversity and inclusion is a priority focus for us, and we are actively seeking candidates from a wide range of backgrounds. We are committed to flexible working and will consider a range of options for the successful applicant to fill this post (these can be discussed at interview stage).

We are also a disability confident committed employer and encourage applicants with disabilities. Please let us know how we can make the recruitment process more accessible for you by emailing hr@thinkahead.org. Please also let us know if you would like us to send you the job pack in a different file format.

Optional touchpoints

We appreciate it can be helpful to ask a few questions before applying for a new job. If you would like to discuss this role informally before applying, we can arrange a call with the hiring manager (Katie Leay, Senior External Relations Manager). Please contact Bhanu at hr@thinkahead.org to schedule this.

Meanwhile, we do our best to update you on your progress as promptly as possible and are happy to share feedback to shortlisted candidates. We usually receive a lot of applications for our positions and cannot therefore provide feedback unless you are seen at interview.

I wish you every success with your application and thank you again for your interest in Think Ahead.

Good luck,



Douglas Ridley
Finance and Operations Director

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About Think Ahead

Everything we do at Think Ahead is guided by our vision for a society where everyone with mental health problems can live fulfilling lives. Our organisation is passionately committed to training talented people into the mental health workforce. Our flagship programme has put mental health social work on the map as a career of choice, helping nearly 1000 people to enter the profession. Just as important has been our work to partner with NHS mental health trusts and local authorities across the country, lending much-needed emphasis to the social factors in people's lives that impact on their mental health.

For more information on what we do, please visit <https://thinkahead.org/>.

Our vision

A thriving mental health workforce able to support people to live the life they want.

We believe

To ensure people with mental health problems are empowered to live the life they want and deserve, the workforce who support them must also be thriving.

Our approach

People with mental health problems need a response that seeks to understand and can support social factors in their lives, from employment to relationships to housing. That is why we advocate for a social approach to mental health provision.

Our mission

We recruit, train, and promote the mental health workforce ensuring the right professionals can deliver the right support to people with mental health problems at the right time.

Our Values

We put our values at the heart of everything by being:

- **Inspirational** - We set ambitious goals, and we attract and lead others to achieve our vision.
- **Inclusive** - We respect everyone, build networks, and act in partnership.
- **Genuine** - We are honest with others, we seek feedback, and we reflect on ourselves.
- **Determined** - We stay on course, we set the right pace, and we don't give up.
- **Effective** - We use evidence and innovation to find what works and get things done.

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Our benefits

Office & Travelling in

- Bright, modern & airy office space in Chancery Lane, with in-house café.
- Free tea and coffee.
- Free weekly fruit delivery.
- Cycle-to-work scheme and interest free bike loans.
- Interest free season ticket loans.

Pay and Pension

- Transparent pay structure.
- Auto-enrolment in our Aviva pension scheme.
- Up to 7% employer contributions dependent on matched contribution from employee.
- Ability to opt out if you'd prefer not to have a pension at all.

Flexible Working

- Hybrid working environment, with roughly 2 days in office and option to work from home rest of the week.
- Flexibility around our core hours of 10am and 4pm.
- We provide you with the necessary equipment needed to work comfortably at home and on the move.

Induction, Training and Development

- Access to training platform with 50 different courses that can be completed.
- Generous training policy including ability to apply for funding for relevant training and development programmes.
- Sponsorship of professional memberships relevant for the role (e.g. CIPD).
- Up to 5 days (matched) study leave for training and development.

Holidays and Time-Off

- 28 days leave + UK bank holidays (pro-rata for part-time staff).
- Rising to 29 days leave + UK bank holidays (pro-rata for part-time staff) after 3 years.
- Office closure between Christmas Eve and New Year's Day, given to staff in addition to their annual leave entitlement.
- Ability to carry over up to 5 days leave to the next holiday year.
- Support for external volunteering including, 2 volunteering days and ability to work flexibly to accommodate daytime meetings

Community and Wellbeing

- Support for employee wellbeing.
- Regular team socials (remote and in-person), with bi-annual staff away days.
- Access to an employee assistance programme.
- Book club every 2 months.

Health

- Free eye-test every 2 years and contribution towards cost of any glasses or contact lenses required due to work.
- Generous paid sick leave based on service.
- Access to mental health first aiders.
- Free Flu vaccine every year (to be arranged by staff member and then reimbursed).

Family Life and Work

- Enhanced Occupational Maternity, Adoption, and Shared Parental leave policies and time off for IVF/fertility appointments.
- Flexible working options to support those with caring responsibilities.

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Role details

Role title	External Relations Officer – Policy and Public Affairs
Accountable to	Senior External Relations Manager
Salary	Starting salary £30,000-34,000pa depending on experience, plus excellent benefits
Contract type	Permanent - Full-time (open to a conversation about flexible working options, including reduced hours or 4 days compressed working pattern)
Location	Think Ahead works flexibly, enabling staff to work from home frequently. Our offices are based in Chancery Lane and staff are required to be in the office at least one or two days per week (which includes Tuesdays ideally)
Start date	Asap

Application timeline

- Applications close on **Monday 30 September 2024 at 9am**.
- Candidates will be notified by **Friday 4 October** whether they have been shortlisted for an interview and if so, asked to complete a task in advance.
- First round interviews will take place on **Tuesday 15 October 2024**.
- Second round interviews will take place on **Tuesday 22 October, if needed**.

About the role

Think Ahead is a charity - our mission is to recruit, train and develop the mental health workforce.

As an organisation, we are committed to finding practical solutions to workforce challenges around recruitment, retention, training and development. We are best known for our flagship two-year mental health social work training programme but are now also expanding to support other areas of the workforce, using the expertise we have built up over the last 10 years.

We are looking for someone with good communications instincts and a passion for policy and public affairs to join our external relations team, to build our networks, advise on policy and to work with us to bring about changes that will improve things for the mental health workforce, and ultimately, for people with mental health needs.

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Job Description

Policy priorities

- Take responsibility for having an understanding of current mental health policy and relevant sector news and inform our internal teams and closest stakeholder groups what this means for our work.
- Produce briefings and Q&As for colleagues.
- Be aware of opportunities for Think Ahead to share its expertise – for example open consultations.
- Work with trainees on our programme, and with partners, to help Think Ahead contribute to policy discussions and issues related to mental health and social work.

Engagement with key stakeholder groups

- Carry out stakeholder mapping and identify key external stakeholders for the organisation.
- Coordinate approaches to MPs and other senior stakeholders, including writing briefings, planning visits and supporting senior colleagues to build and maintain sector relationships.
- Engage with our key internal stakeholder groups – for example our Lived Experience Partnership, alumni and trainees from our programme – to ensure their expertise is being fed into policy and influencing plans. This could be through working groups, surveys, content creation etc.

Building Think Ahead's profile

- Research relevant sector events and pitch for Think Ahead's speakers to be included.
- Support colleagues in preparing for meetings and speaking opportunities – e.g. through briefs and support with PowerPoint presentations.
- Create content (e.g. blogs) to highlight the value of social approaches in mental health, highlight key issues facing the mental health workforce, and to promote understanding of the organisation's work and policy positions.
- Support colleagues with social media responses to relevant news and policy announcements.

This is a broad description of duties. The role is likely to vary day-to-day, and the successful candidate will also need to assist with other external relations/communications tasks as required.

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Person specification

E = Essential D = Desirable

Knowledge and experience:

- Experience working within communications focused role and/or dealing with policy and public affairs. (E)
- Graduate with a related degree (D)
- Experience working with a range of internal and external stakeholders. (D)
- Experience reviewing information and preparing summaries or briefings. (E)
- Knowledge of current policy thinking in mental health, social work, and other relevant areas. (D)
- Experience of influencing policy and/or building awareness of an organisation's work through policy channels e.g. consultations, briefings and meetings, parliamentary activities. (D)
- Experience of working with diverse groups to gather expertise and insights. (D)
- Knowledge of mental health sector. (D)
- Knowledge of recruitment/graduate market. (D)

Skills and capabilities

- Good external relations and communications instincts. (E)
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills. (E)
- Ability to communicate and influence effectively at a range of levels, both internally and externally. (E)
- Proactive in seeking out and acting upon opportunities. (E)
- Ability to absorb complex information and convert into easy to understand and engaging content. (E)
- Ability to work independently and take ownership to deliver agreed objectives. (E)
- Strong attention to detail with good organisational and prioritisation skills. (E)
- Adopts a flexible and creative approach to problems solving. (E)
- Demonstrates empathy and understanding when working with people in challenging circumstances. (E)
- Enthusiastic team player with a collaborative approach, able to bring people with you. (E)
- Comfortable using MS Office 365 including tools. (E)
- Ability to use social media platforms for example: Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. (D)

Attitudes and approaches:

- Commitment to Think Ahead's mission, vision and values and ways of working: Inspirational, Inclusive, Genuine, Determined, Effective. (E)
- Passion for learning and desire to try new things. (E)
- Flexible around hybrid working arrangements. (E)

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Candidate Journey

Below you'll find some guidance and tips for the recruitment and selection process.

Guidance on completing your application form

When applying via our careers website, you will be asked some initial questions, including details of your experience, work history and any relevant training you have completed. You'll also be asked to complete a supporting statement, outlining how you fit our person specification for that role. Below is some advice for what we're looking for in each section of the application.

Education and training

Give a list of any relevant formal and informal training. Formal training is training that is certified, e.g. a professional qualification. For each role, we only ask for qualifications where necessary for the role, for example in a finance role where an accountancy qualification is required. Upon being invited to interview, you may be asked to provide evidence of the relevant qualification.

Aside from formal qualifications, we're interested in hearing about any other training you may have completed that would be beneficial for the role you're applying for. This could be in the form of training courses, webinars, online learning or attending a conference.

Present and previous employment

Starting with your current or last employer, please list your relevant job history, detailing your previous employers. Provide the job title and the period you worked for them. Briefly describe the main duties of the post. This information may be used to assess whether you meet the experience required for the vacancy.

Supporting statement

This is the most important part of the application. We're not looking for this section to cover a complete career history – instead, use the relevant parts and focus on the skills you have developed as a result. It is a good idea to address the criteria from the person specification and provide examples to demonstrate how your experience and skillset is a good fit for the role, and for Think Ahead specifically. We're also interested in hearing how you embody the Think Ahead values and how you demonstrate these through your experience and skills.

Don't forget other relevant experience outside work that may contribute to meeting the person specification, such as community, voluntary, and other interests. Describe any relevant skills this experience has helped you develop. Remember, it is your skills and abilities relevant to this job that we are looking for. You don't have to write several pages in support of your application, instead just focus on ensuring you meet the essential criteria in the person specification.

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Next stages of the selection process

Shortlisting

Once the vacancy has closed, our hiring panel will review your application and respond to you within one week of the vacancy closing. Our team will assess you against the person specification for the role and determine your suitability for the position. After screening you will be advised whether you have been shortlisted for an interview.

Interview & Assessment

We usually run a two-stage interview process. Interviews are usually conducted via video call to enable as much flexibility as possible, but in some cases, they may be held in-person at our offices in Chancery Lane. Our interviews involve a combination of job-related behavioural and situational questions to better understand your capabilities and prior experiences as well as what you are looking for in your next role.

Our interview panels always consist of at least two people, and we are committed to having a member of our [Lived Experience Partnership](#) on the panel where possible. If we require you to prepare a presentation for your interview, we will provide you with the brief and details upon confirming your interview slot, ensuring that you have adequate time to prepare it.

Written Assessments

You may be asked to complete a short, written assessment before your interview, the details of which will vary depending on the role you applied for. In the case that this applies to your role, you will be sent information on the task and provided with a window of time to complete at your own pace. Our written tasks assess the skills and competencies needed to be successful in the role, so bear that in mind when you complete it.

Interview Preparation

In preparation for your interview, we recommend doing some research into who we are and what we do, as well researching our organisational values. The interview is your chance to show us why you want to work here but it is also your opportunity to interview us and determine if we are a good fit for you; so, come prepared with any questions you want to ask us.

Second Stage Interview

If you are successful following the first round of interviews, you may be invited to attend a second stage interview. Second stage interviews are typically an interview with a director or our Chief Executive, Philippa. We will advise you in advance if we need you to do any additional preparation.

For more detailed information on the process as well as FAQs, please visit our careers site at <https://www.work-for-thinkahead.org/candidate-journey>.

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The legal bits and providing feedback

Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974

You should not sign the application form without being clear about what you must reveal about yourself. For instance, you do not need to disclose convictions that would be deemed as being spent under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, or cautions, reprimands and final warnings that are over five years old, unless they are exempt from the Act.

References

We will only collect details for referees where we have offered you a role with us and, will confirm this with you before contacting them directly. At least one referee must be known to you in a work capacity, having line managed you.

Reasonable adjustments

We're committed to ensuring that everyone can participate fully in the process, so if you need some adjustments made to do so, please let us know and we will do our best to accommodate where possible.

Feedback & unsuccessful candidates

Your details will remain on file for 6 months after you have applied for a position with us. If a suitable vacancy becomes available during this time, we will contact you to find out whether you are interested in being considered. At the end of the 6 months, you will receive an email from our recruitment system asking you to confirm whether you would like your details to remain on file. If you do not wish for your details to remain on file, they will be removed in line with GDPR.

If you are unsuccessful at interview stage, we'll be able to offer you feedback via a call with the hiring manager. Unfortunately, due to high volumes of applications received, we're not always able to provide feedback to those who aren't shortlisted to the interview stage.