



Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2025 - 27

1. Introduction

This Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy has been informed by the views of colleagues from across the organisation and sets out how we will achieve our organisational aims around EDI.

We believe we cannot achieve our vision, mission and organisational strategy without also addressing equity, diversity and inclusion.

While current UK Equality legislation refers to nine protected characteristics (i.e. specific demographic groups) which have legal protection against discrimination, our intention is to address EDI in its broadest sense. Our strategy and its actions are not limited to only meeting legal compliance.

The causes of discrimination and inequality are structural in nature and can only be addressed by systemic changes. We recognise that racism is entrenched in our society, and that our colleagues and those using our services and spaces are adversely affected by racism and discrimination.

There is a need for structural change to address racism and discrimination. We also know that by using the voices, experiences and ideas of those with lived experience, we will help bring about the changes necessary for us to build a fairer future for all.

We acknowledge that, as an organisation, we are on a journey and have much to learn. At present our Senior Management Team is not representative in terms of ethnicity and across the organisation we have work to do to ensure we represent groups experiencing discrimination e.g. people being confident to share that they are LGBTQI+. We also recognise that we need to do more to consider intersectionality and to learn more about how intersections in identities compound discrimination and exclusion.

By the end of the three-year period covered by the strategy we want our commitment to the goals of this plan to be embedded and for our progress to be recognised. We want to be more diverse and inclusive as an employer, with progression seen as important. In the delivery of our activities, including our approach to research and advocacy, we want to be able to show how we are exposing and addressing the impact of structural inequality and making the case for change alongside those with lived experience of inequality and poverty.

Our Strategic Plan, launched last year, outlines our priorities around EDI and underpins what is most important to us. Our vision is of a fairer future with an end to poverty, injustice and inequality.

We work towards this by:

- Addressing poverty and injustice through advice and support and influencing systemic change
- Shifting power to people and communities affected by injustice and inequality
- Collaborating to end poverty and build fairer systems and institutions.

Our strategic ambitions include that we:

- Ensure that we address systemic inequality and racial discrimination across our work and our organisation.

One of our key priorities to deliver the Strategic Plan is:

- Embed our approach to diversity, inclusion, equity; commit to becoming an anti-racist organisation and ensure we are addressing systemic racism and discrimination across our work and our organisation.

During the time when this plan was being produced, the country experienced a period of riots and violence directly principally towards Muslim communities, asylum seekers and refugees. There has been a significant increase in reports of Islamophobic abuse, anti-immigrant rhetoric and actions and concern that the language of public discourse increasingly fuels these ideas. Thinking about how we respond to this situation in a way that makes sense for our charity, our colleagues and our community is part of our strategy.

However, our work on EDI needs to ensure that we have the basics right and that we can show that we are delivering what we commit to.

2. About our organisation¹

On 1 April 2024 we had 84 members of staff. Our Board was made up of eight trustees.

Of the total employee count, (33) 39.29% are male and (51) 60.71% are female. Based on 84 employees, 58% are from an ethnic minority group.

Of our eight trustees, five were female and three were male, six were from ethnic minority groups. We recruited additional trustees who were appointed to the Board after April 2024 and collected demographic data in the summer of 2024. Not all trustees provided their information: three did not respond.

Our Senior Management Team (SMT) was made up of seven people on 1 April 2024. Of these five were female and two male. None of the SMT were from a minority ethnic group.

Our aim is to have an SMT that is more representative of the wider staff team in terms of ethnicity. This strategy and action plan sets out some specific actions that will help support us with this including our approach to recruitment and internal development.

As of 1 April 2024, we had 19 colleagues with management responsibility but who are not members of the Senior Management Team. Our definition of 'management responsibility' is broad – including project managers, some without formal line management responsibility.

¹ Based on the 2024 Our People report (data from April 2024).

All are deemed to have a level of responsibility and complexity within our organisational framework.

Of our managers, (12) 63% are female and (7) 37% are male; 68% (13) are from minority ethnic groups.

In 2024 we started collecting additional data about our trustees, staff teams (and job candidates) in relation to socio-economic background. We felt that this is an important area for us to have awareness of, particularly because of the mission of our charity.

The question we have asked to gauge this information is, 'Occupation of main household earner when you were aged about 14?'. This is based on research by the Social Mobility Commission ([Cross-industry toolkit - Social Mobility Commission](#))

From the responses that we have collected to date, the breakdown for our staff is:

- Professional or 'higher' socio-economic background - 12
- Intermediate background - 4
- Working class or 'lower' socio-economic background – 8
- Other - 1
- Prefer not to say – 2
- Data not shared - 57

And for our trustees:

- Professional or 'higher' socio-economic background - 6
- Intermediate background - 0
- Working class or 'lower' socio-economic background – 2

Further information about our team is provided in the Our People report published on our website.

3. EDI activity prior to 2024

During 2020-21, we worked with an external organisation to hold workshops and develop our approach to EDI. However, due to organisational changes we did not turn this work into a comprehensive plan and in 2023 the Board apologised to colleagues for this delay.

In 2021, Toynbee Hall published its first report into its staff team, called 'Our People'. This provided information about our staff team and also about gender and ethnicity pay gaps. In this document, the following goals were set out:

- be more proactive about recruiting to vacant posts from our local community
- create more opportunities for progression.

This was in addition to a goal that had been set previously to recruit more diverse trustees and specifically more trustees with a connection to the local community, more women, and more trustees from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds. This commitment led to the Board of Toynbee Hall becoming more diverse in age, ethnicity and gender in trustee recruitment rounds from 2019 onwards. Trustees with connections to Tower Hamlets and Toynbee Hall were also recruited during these rounds. However, trustee data was only collected formally in 2024 so we were unable to evidence this change.

We published an updated version of the Our People report in December 2023, alongside the Strategic Plan. The report was updated again in 2024 and contains information about our staff team and trustees as well as our gender and ethnicity pay gap. In this report, we also committed to reviewing our use of terminology since the use of aggregator terms such as BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) is no longer viewed as appropriate and many organisations have moved away from the term completely including the UK Government in their data reports, (<https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/style-guide/writing-about-ethnicity/>).

In addition, we have reviewed our approach to data collection. As well as collecting demographic data about our trustees, we have started to collect data about socio-economic background to support our efforts support social and economic equality. One key priority is to improve the way we collect data about candidates applying for roles at Toynbee Hall. A less manual method of collecting the data will improve reporting and analysis; enabling us to better understand and use the data that we have and to take action accordingly.

4. How we developed the plan

Colleague Survey

We carried out a Colleague Survey at the end of 2023. The participation rate of this survey was 84% overall (69 individual responses). This high response rate allows the survey results to be interpreted to accurately reflect overall sentiment of the staff at the organisation.

Diversity data monitoring as part of the survey also demonstrated that responses were received from across varied demographics reflecting diversity in ages, ethnic origins, religions, sexual orientations, caring duties, disabilities, health conditions as well as tenures across Toynbee Hall.

The overall engagement score was 63%. This means that overall, colleagues scored 63% favourably and a further 25% scored neutral responses.

There were some really positive responses recorded such as 'Alignment & Involvement' and 'Management' scoring 81% and 78% favourably respectively. The less favourable scores sat in 'Teamwork & Ownership' and 'Innovation' scoring 60% and 59% respectively, with the lowest scoring element being 'Action' where it was only 44% favourable score.

'Equity, Diversity and Inclusion' scored around the mid-point at 70% favourable score. The top scoring questions in this area were 'My Manager champions inclusivity at Toynbee Hall' (82%) and 'I feel respected at Toynbee Hall' (81%).

The survey was benchmarked against other UK based charities that use the same tool; in many key areas we scored above or at the external benchmark. For example, on 'Alignment and Involvement' we scored 8% above the benchmark and 'Feedback and Recognition' was 7% above the benchmark and even 'Action' (our lowest score) was 2% above the benchmark. However, in some areas we scored below the benchmark notably in 'Learning and Development' (2% below) and 'Communication and Collaboration' (7% below).

Reviewing the data by demographics and length of tenure showed there was a variance in how those who have been at the organisation for six years or more experience the organisation in comparison to those who have been here for under six years, with those who have been at the organisation for longer tending to respond less favourably. This variance was apparent across all areas of the survey. The data also showed that those who identified as White English / White British scored their view of the organisation less favourably overall in almost all categories.

Following the survey, we developed an action plan which we have been reporting regularly. This identified the following areas to be improved as identified by the Colleague Survey:

- Approach to pay and reward
- Internal communications and the communication of decisions
- More opportunities for SMT to communicate with staff outside of all staff meetings / More visibility of SMT
- Representation and diversity, particularly in SMT
- To explore what our expectation of behaviours is as an organisation
- Workload division – being able to plan and prioritise
- Raising concerns – more clarity about how to raise concerns
- Bringing people together more and learning from each other's experiences.

Focus groups

We commissioned an organisation expert in issues of inclusion and diversity to review our documents, including the results of the Colleague Survey, and to facilitate a series of focus groups across the organisation including one with trustees and one with SMT.

All staff were invited to attend a focus group, which were held online. The responses to the invitations went to the organisation facilitating the groups. There was also an opportunity to submit ideas of comments straight to the facilitators. The focus groups were attended by two managers, six members of staff, six members of SMT and seven trustees.

The main themes that were identified through the focus groups were:

- Representation at senior level
- Lack of resources
- Disconnection and inconsistency

Representation at senior level was spoken about in all the focus groups in various ways. Overall, there was a desire to see Toynbee Hall put in practical efforts in diversifying their workforce, particularly in leadership positions such as Board and senior management level.

There was discussion and acknowledgement that this cannot be changed overnight, but also suggestions of practically engaging with and implementing additional inclusive recruitment practices.

Many participants mentioned lack of resources, mainly time and funding. There was an acknowledgement of this being part of the nature of Toynbee Hall as a charity that relies on external funding. However, it is not clear that the extent of the impact of this is fully understood.

A lack of resources effects discussions around inclusion e.g. the ability to share and learn cultural awareness, allyship, celebrating key dates. There is no one in a recognised role at Toynbee Hall to help make this happen for staff, and where there has been a desire to do this work, this has been voluntary and on top of the existing workload.

A lack of resources also relates to development, progression and promotion. It was expressed that there is little learning, if any at all, available for staff to access to develop within their roles and possibly progress or be promoted. This felt particularly true for those from marginalised ethnic groups.

Disconnection (an 'us' vs 'them' culture) was a theme mentioned across the focus groups. This came in a form of a divide between different departments/functions of the organisation. This might be due to the different ways departments or teams work due to the requirements of funding e.g. some teams work a shift pattern which includes evenings and weekends or the nature of the work e.g. between service delivery teams and those working in support functions or due to differences in resources available to support the work. However, there was a real interest in finding out more about the work of other teams, understanding more about why there are differences as well as identifying any myths and misunderstandings about the work teams do.

Inconsistencies across departments was expressed quite a lot as well. It is felt that depending on roles, or 'hierarchy', or even who your line manager may be, different sets of rules/ways of working apply.

5. EDI in our services and activities including research

In discussion of our approach to EDI in our services and activities, we need to consider the reach and impact of those activities, how we are including those who use services in our learning and shaping future initiatives and how we are shifting power to those with lived experience to ensure more policy and decisions are made with their input.

According to London Poverty Profile (Trust for London), Black and minority ethnic (BME) Londoners are significantly more likely to be in poverty than white Londoners. 34% of BME Londoners were in poverty in 2022-23 - double the proportion of white Londoners (17%).

Bangladeshi Londoners are by far the most likely group to be in poverty; 63% of this group were in poverty in 2022-23 compared to the groups least likely to be in-poverty in London "Mixed/Multiple Ethnic" (24%) and "White" (17%).

Across our debt and advice services we seek to reach those most affected by economic insecurity and ensure that we can improve the situations of those who most need help. Given the pressure of debt on individual wellbeing, we have been focusing on finding accessible ways for people to access debt advice and will continue to explore opportunities for offering access to debt advice when and where people need it.

In FY 2023-24, Toynbee Hall's advice services, including the Debt Free Advice (DFA) partnership made up of 13 other organisations, supported a total of 14,991 people. This figure includes 3,263 who we reached from our Tower Hamlets advice hub at Toynbee Hall. Of the total of almost 15,000 people:

- 11% have a disability
- 59% were female
- 66% were from an ethnic minority

In our debt advice work we are seeing an increase in the amount of debt people are experiencing, the number of debts they have and in the complexity of their situations. For instance, across the DFA partnership (including the debt advice Toynbee Hall delivers directly) we estimate a case takes on average nine hours to resolve.

We have data about the outcomes of our work in terms of financial benefits to individuals though we have not, to date, cross-referenced this with demographic data. This would help us to explore disparities in results and identify the need for additional support or different measures.

Funders of advice are increasingly interested in demonstrating that support is reaching those most impacted by poverty especially by reason of age, ethnicity and disability.

Our community services reach older people and people experiencing structural inequality. These services are hyper local and operate in our local area. In Tower Hamlets, 44% of older people are living in income deprivation and 48% of children are growing up in poverty (compared to a London average of 33%), with clear implications for the physical, social and emotional well-being of the oldest and youngest residents.

Our reliance on a Participatory Action research approach to our research programme works to address the power imbalance between Toynbee Hall as a research institute and the population we are working with as research subjects. This has important implications for EDI in that we co-design our research and ultimately the findings, recommendations and policy positions that come out of the research with community members. As an example, our recent Emotional Support for Young People research was co-designed with 12 peer researchers from low-income families residing in Tower Hamlets identified key issues. They co-designed question guides and conducted interviews and workshops with 44 young people and 25 of their parents/guardians. Over 90% of participants were from an ethnic minority background, and 38% of young people and 52% of parents/guardians were disabled. This approach helps us to identify and develop policy recommendations to address structural inequalities.

We recognise that change will not happen unless systems and institutions recognise systemic inequality and make decisions with consideration of the views of those with lived experience.

6. Our EDI vision

Our vision of where we want to be is one that goes beyond the three years of this strategy. We believe that there will always be ways we can build on what we have done / are doing and that the end point is a fairer future for all.

- We can demonstrate that our organisation, at all levels, is representative of London and our local area.
- People tell us that their experience of the organisation as colleagues, people using our services or those working with us on projects is that we are clear in our communication, fair and equitable in our decisions and treat people with respect.
- Colleagues, clients and volunteers tell us that they can be their best selves here, free from discrimination, bullying or harassment. They also know how to raise concerns and trust that action will be taken.
- Colleagues know that equity, diversity and inclusion is important to Toynbee Hall. Our progress on the actions in our EDI plan is shared and the plan is reviewed regularly to seek further areas to improve.
- Colleagues are confident that their contributions to organisational initiatives will be acknowledged for example in appraisals.
- We seek to support the progression of staff. Within the resources available, we will find ways to support the development of colleagues and ensure these opportunities are accessible.
- As an organisation (and alongside others), we challenge racism and Islamophobia particularly as it affects our colleagues, communities where we work and those who use our services.
- We can show that our services, research and advocacy are shaped by the input and ideas of those with lived experience of the issues. Our communications amplify the

voices of people with lived experience, and we work collaboratively to influence systems, institutions and policy.

These are the aims of our EDI plan:

Aim 1: Demonstrate a tangible and action-focused approach to equity, diversity and inclusion at Toynbee Hall.

Aim 2: Increase representation, particularly in leadership, and provide clear support for internal progression.

Aim 3: Improve visibility of leaders, internal communication of decisions and access to policies and procedures to create greater trust.

Aim 4: Ensure that our approach to EDI is reflected in the delivery, development and reach of our services and our approach to research and advocacy. Demonstrate how we are addressing discrimination and racism as it effects our colleagues and our services.

For each aim we have set out a series of actions to be carried out in the remainder of 2024-25 and throughout 2025-26. Alongside this we have set out a series of measures to show progress – with benchmarks where possible to allow us to show realistically what change looks like.

Organisational resources are tight and, while we are committed to making progress, we are also trying to be realistic about what is possible. For that reason, we have identified a series of second stage actions to take place in 2026-27 and beyond. Before these further actions are planned out, a review of progress should take place to support prioritisation and to draw from further learning e.g. from a further Colleague Survey. Section 8 below sets out our initial action plan.

7. Monitoring and reporting on progress

Progress on delivering the EDI strategy should be reported to the Board with an update on actions / outputs going to each Board meeting and an annual review to show progress on the aims and measures given.

The detail of the strategy should be a key part of internal communications with regular updates on progress. Managers should be encouraged to check in with teams about their engagement with internal communications such as the CEO update and attendance at All Staff Meetings. As much as possible, the internal communications will reference the commitments in the EDI strategy, so colleagues are reminded of why we are focusing on certain areas and what it relates to.

The EDI strategy and action plan should be published on our website. The organisation has previously committed to producing an annual version of the Our People report which provides demographic information about the staff team and trustees. It is proposed that this is combined with the report on the progress of our EDI strategy, which will include demographic information as it relates to the objectives of the strategy, ethnicity and gender pay gap information and report on progress on aims and objectives.

In addition, we will report to the Board, our staff team and externally on our progress in delivering our strategic plan. Our EDI goals are part of our strategy, and we will provide updates as part of our overall progress report.

8. Action Plan to deliver the strategy

Aim 1: Demonstrate a tangible and action-focused approach to equity, diversity and inclusion at Toynbee Hall	
KPIs	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increased colleague confidence in actions being delivered <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Benchmark is 44% (2023 Colleague Survey) 2. Reduce any identified pay gaps for women, the global majority employees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Benchmark is gender and ethnicity pay gaps set out in 2024 Our People report 	
Activity in 2024-25 and 2025-26	Led by
Establish a simple, fair and transparent pay system	Head of People
Publish our gender and ethnicity pay gap information externally and internally with plans for how we will reduce gaps.	CEO
Identify Board lead for EDI and ensure EDI reporting and actions are on the Board agenda /forward plan.	CEO
Identify the data we will use to set benchmarks to measure our progress on targets for representation. Identifying priorities based on areas where we are less representative.	CEO / Head of People
Senior management team to make commitments to EDI and their personal learning during appraisals and share with organisation.	CEO
Create new post of inclusion officer to support our approach to EDI.	Head of People
Build on internal communications processes to show ‘You said, we did’ to build confidence that the organisation will take action.	CEO
Facilitate regular opportunities for staff to hear different perspectives and learn from others.	CEO
Establish and share an inclusion calendar of events, learning and educational sessions/ bite-sized online learning sessions	Inclusion Officer
Streamline and improve accessibility of guidance around mental health and wellbeing, key contacts, and support structures and make staff aware of how to engage with it.	Head of People
Raise staff and managers’ awareness and confidence in challenging discriminatory language or behaviour through re-running Active Bystander training (or equivalent), a workshop about micro-aggressions etc.	Head of People
Create more opportunities for networking and socials across the whole organisation and ensure they are welcoming to all staff.	Inclusion Officer
Include an equalities impact assessment or EDI assessment of major decisions or proposals – including reference to the EDI implications in Board papers.	CEO
Track informal and formal complaints/grievances and accusations of discrimination and racism and report to Board / People Committee regularly on these.	Head of People
Aim 2: Increase representation, particularly in leadership, and provide clear support for internal progression	
KPIs:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increased diversity of candidate pools for senior and managerial roles, ensuring at least 40% of shortlisted candidates are from the global majority, 20% from disabled groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Benchmark is 33% for ethnicity (based on two SMT level recruitments before Sept 2024) 2. Increased percentage of the global majority employees in the SMT by 33% in three years <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Benchmark is 0 (as of October 2024) 3. Maintain a diverse trustee Board <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Benchmark is five male / six female and five from ethnic minority groups (of 11) (from mid-year 2024) 4. Improved confidence in development and progression opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Benchmark is 43% who believe there are good career opportunities for them at Toynbee Hall (from 2023 colleague survey) 	
Activity in 2024-25 and 2025-26	Led by
Agree budget for an applicant tracking system to enable us to use data to inform decisions and measure and track progress.	Head of People
Implement Application Tracking System to collect data regarding applicants	Head of People
Review and update current recruitment practices.	Head of People
Implement inclusive recruitment training for recruiting managers.	Head of People
Ensure interview panels are representative - especially for posts at Manager and above; 33% of the assessment panel for senior and managerial roles should be from the global majority groups	Head of People
Senior Leadership Team at Toynbee Hall to complete anti-racism training.	CEO

Aim 3: Improve visibility of leaders, internal communication of decisions and access to policies and procedures to create greater trust

KPIs

1. Improved internal communications – particularly around key issues / decisions
 - Benchmark is 40% (based on 2023 Colleague Survey question on open and honest two-way communication)
2. Increased confidence in senior management team
 - Benchmark is 54% (based on 2023 Colleague Survey)
3. Take up of mentoring opportunities to support development especially those groups currently under-represented in management and senior management
 - Scheme launched in 2025 – no benchmark

Activity in 2024-25 and 2025-26	Led by
Develop Senior Management Team profiles and ‘a day in the work life’ content to build understanding and trust in the leadership team and allow new and existing staff to understand responsibilities.	CEO/Inclusion Officer
Increase contact with SMT for Managers and other leaders e.g. presenting at SMT.	SMT
Acknowledge work to support organisational initiatives as part of appraisals and opportunities for promotion. This should include volunteering, involvement in groups or committees.	SMT
Create guidance/visual flowchart of leadership responsibilities so staff know who to go to with concerns or feedback	Inclusion Officer
Develop or secure management training and support for line managers to cover recruitment, supporting performance, managing attendance, diversity and inclusion.	Head of People
Establish access to mentoring and reverse mentoring to allow staff of all levels to learn from and develop each other.	Head of People

Aim 4: Ensure that our approach to EDI is reflected in the delivery, development and reach of our services and our approach to research and advocacy. Demonstrate how we are addressing discrimination and racism as it effects our colleagues and our services.

KPIs

1. Proposals for new projects or development of existing themes of work involve people with lived experience and especially those groups at disproportionate risk of experiencing poverty built in
2. Increased numbers of roles for paid Participatory Action researchers and / or community advocates or equivalent
 - Benchmark is three paid PAR roles, community advocates in LA+ and City Advice (tbc)

Activity in 2024-25 and 2025-26	Led by
Set the expectation that our services consider how they will engage groups most effected by the issues and how they will involve service users in developing and reviewing their work.	SMT
Across our research and advocacy work demonstrate that we are seeking to shift power and amplify the voices of those with lived experience of the issues through continuing reliance on Participatory Action Research approach to co-design methods of identifying, analysing and advocating for policies to address structural inequalities.	Head of Communities and Social Change
Work with colleagues and other VCS organisations to challenge Islamophobia and racism as it impacts our colleagues and activities.	CEO / SMT
Review existing roles which support community advocates and engagement to learn from their experiences and ensure we are utilising their expertise appropriately	SMT

Stage 2 activity (beyond 2025-26)

Aim 1

- Look at how we make time, space and give 'permission' to contribute – building an understanding that contributing to the wider organisation is part of everyone's role. This needs to be led by SMT and recognised in terms of workload and setting targets and objectives.
- Provide guidance/education on inclusive communication skills and inclusive language for those responsible for internal and external communications.
- Implement an inclusion passport to all staff to share support needs and preferred ways of working and communication. Embed its usage as part of effective line management.
- Identify appropriate external accreditation processes to help benchmark against best practice.

Aim 2

- Review and improve the induction pack and process for all new starters.
- Implement mentoring programmes pairing SMT members with high-potential employees from the global majority and disabled groups.
- Implement positive action shortlisting for roles at Manager level or above. (Taking positive action allows an employer, when faced with two or more candidates of equal merit, to select a candidate from a group that faces a disadvantage or is under-represented in its workforce over a candidate who isn't from that group to achieve diversity in its workforce.)

Aim 3

- Use appraisals and personal development plans to identify opportunities to support staff in progression and promotion (acknowledging that there might not be an internal route to promotion due to size of the organisation).
- Build clear and effective structures to allow staff across all levels and areas of Toyntee Hall to feed into decision making.

Aim 4

- Develop further projects with paid roles for community advocacy and engagement embedded within them.
- Develop further Participant Action Research projects with paid roles for researchers and support for advocacy.
- Establish partnerships with relevant organisations that can help support wider systems change and campaigning in the context of EDI and lend our voice to the actions of partner organisations.
- Review of process for investigation of formal complaints /grievances and outcomes/lessons learnt/changes as a result.