

Respect, Inclusion and Belonging (RIB) Strategy and Action Plan 2022-26 **September 2025 Update**

The RIB strategy and action plan 2022-26 were approved by the Board in December 2022 and rolled out to the whole organisation in January 2023. This report provides a summary of the progress made towards the intended journey and the five strategic priorities over the past two years.

The strategy aimed to ensure we maintain a diverse team of incredible people and an inclusive culture that celebrates diversity and understands intersectionality. That we will have a workplace of allies where racism and discrimination are challenged through robust policies, procedures, and training.

The vision and mission of the strategy are:

Our EEDI vision is
a community of kind and empathetic people who bond around shared values, feel respected, and have a voice in decisions that affect them

Our EEDI mission is
we aim to create an equitable culture that attracts, retains, and develops staff to empower them to create a safe and inclusive environment to support women and girls in transforming their lives

To support the strategy an action plan was created. The plan identified steps to becoming a more equitable workplace and providing a more inclusive service. The actions support the five strategic priorities and focus on looking inwards at our staff, volunteers, and Board, looking towards our service users, and looking outwards beyond our workforce. By documenting these actions and outcomes we will keep ourselves accountable.

Attract & retain diverse talent

Centring service users

Build an inclusive culture

Wider Impact

Where are we going? An update

This report will provide an update on what has been achieved against the four pillars below. In addition, we will then look at the five strategic priorities, related actions and what has been achieved against these actions/priorities.



Data

We have actively encouraged staff to update their diversity data by sharing the following information via the P&C newsletter:

RIB Strategy Goal – Team Data – Be Counted

'As you may be aware one of the goals of the Respect, Inclusion and Belonging Strategy is for us to have a greater understanding of the diversity of our workforce. This supports us in understanding the demographic make across the organisation and how we measure against the communities we serve, and assess the impact of our work on equity, equality diversity and inclusion.'

We want everyone to feel confident and in control of their data. You have the option to say, 'prefer not to say'. However, your information is confidential, with only a small number of the P&C Team having access to allow us to provide anonymised monitoring reports and KPIs on staff diversity to the SLT and the Board. Your personal data will never be used in any decisions that affect you personally.

In addition, this data will indicate if we need to consider additional actions to support individuals from marginalised communities who often face societal inequalities that can impact individuals receiving the same opportunities as others'.

BE COUNTED – please update your personal data on HR Hub!

Furthermore, we continue to provide the Board with deep dives on a number of aspects including ethnicity and grade. These deep dives give us an opportunity to analyse the representation across the organisation and whether after further annual reviews we may need to consider introducing equitable initiatives.

Retention and Recruitment

We have undertaken several steps to ensure that our recruitment is more inclusive including a new recruitment policy and training for managers and updated onboarding process. We updated the candidate information pack and [work for us website page](#) to include information on 'how we commit to a diverse and inclusive work environment'.

We made changes to the equal opportunities page on HR hub to provide clearer guidance on self-identifying as D/deaf, disabled and/or neurodiverse and added questions on social mobility.

We have added reference to the [Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion website page](#) to the vacancies page and each individual role has a reference to the website page, values, Respect, Inclusion and Belonging strategy and Respect Charter.

Finally, the EDI Advisor has begun attending Welcome events to draw attention to Refuge's EEDI resources and Equality Network Groups to highlight the importance of EEDI to new starters.

Champion inclusion and fighting racism and discrimination

This remains a fundamental drive and commitment for us at Refuge. We have undertaken several steps towards this goal as follows;

- In late 2021 Refuge signed up to the Violence Against Women and Girls Anti-Racism Charter and created an action plan to ensure our commitment remains active. The plan is reviewed annually.
- We have a statement on our EEDI website page of the importance of being an anti-racist organisation and how we are committed to challenging racism both within the organisation and beyond.
- An Anti-Racism policy was created with input from the Anti-Racism Equality Network Group to support our commitment to challenging racism.
- A Respectful Engagement policy was created to provide guidance on how to support staff and volunteers facing racism and/or discrimination by service users and helpline callers.
- We continue to provide training on allyship.
- A EEDI Skillgate e-learning course called 'Creating a team culture of Respect, Inclusion and Belonging' was launched in June 2023. It is mandatory for all staff and trustees and volunteers and requires a refresh every two years.

The course covers the following topics:

- Understanding the key EEDI terms - including equality and equity
- Unconscious bias

- Stereotypes
- Privilege
- Understanding microaggressions
- Allyship
- Bystander Intervention and a few other topics
- An e-learning course was created to provide further information on microaggressions and how to manage them.

Societal impacts on service users

The strategy has asked us as a feminist organisation striving for inclusivity and equality to recognise and understand that gender inequality is endured differently by women and girls from marginalised communities. Through this lens each directorates needs to consider as part of their business plans what steps can be taken to improve the experiences of our diverse range of service users/survivors.

This has included.

- Considering how we ensure that we hear from a diverse range of survivor voices
- Increasing our awareness of societal inequalities and the impact of racism and discrimination
- Remain committed to the VAWG Anti-Racism Charter
- Continuing to provide culturally specific services
- Working collaboratively with partner organisations and 'by and for' organisations to support all women
- Where possible use our influence and voice to support greater public and government awareness of these inequalities
- Supporting by and for organisations in raising awareness of issues affecting women and girls from marginalised communities

Key updates against the five strategic priorities

Below is an update on the progress made against the five strategic priorities. The aim of the priorities is to ensure that we are bold and take decisive action to support the vision and mission of the strategy and ensure that respect, inclusion and belonging are fundamental to Refuge's EEDI journey.

1. Maximize opportunities to attract, develop, support, and retain diverse representation across the organisation – staff, volunteers, and Board members.

Objective	Actions
Ensure social media and the website are representative of the communities we support / External comms is representative of the communities we support	The Comms team regularly liaise with the Equality Network Chairs when considering which key inclusion dates to mark on socials. Furthermore, the team continually review imagery to ensure we are representative. Work is taking place to ensure we present a diverse range of voices and stories supporting our aim to be an intersectional feminist organisation.
Commit to policies and procedures that can lead to the reduction of societal barriers to gaining employment within the organisation	A new recruitment policy was created and is supported by training for managers to ensure recruitment is inclusive. Furthermore, onboarding has been revised and information on how Refuge is a safe and inclusive workplace are shared via the work for us website page and candidate information pack. Work will continue on reviewing recruitment to ensure it is inclusive.
Ensuring that the Board have a deep understanding of EEDI issues	All Board and Committee Members are enrolled onto the 'Creating a team culture of respect, inclusion and belonging' and 'understanding microaggressions' e-learning courses. In addition, they can attend Latte and Learns and other staff training.
Continue to develop an inclusive environment for all (pledges and importance of EEDI)	Refuge is a Disability Confident Employer (level 2), has signed up to the 'Show your salary' pledge and is a Living Wage employer to signpost Refuge as a safe and inclusive workplace. Key inclusion and faith dates are shared via the CEO's weekly update, P&C newsletter and SLT Sponsors send out emails on behalf of their ENGs on significant inclusion dates. The Equality Network Groups host the monthly Latte and Learn which provide an opportunity to create further awareness and support inclusion.

2. Develop and embed an inclusive culture within the organisation to ensure all staff and volunteers have a work environment in which they feel safe and can be their authentic selves.

Objective	Actions
A workforce that is respectful of each other	A Respect Charter was created and can be found on EEDI website and EEDI SharePoint pages.
Improve how we work together (EEDI training & self-education)	<p>In addition to the 'Creating a team culture of respect, inclusion and belonging' and 'understanding microaggressions' e-learning courses, allyship training has been held annually.</p> <p>In July 2025 both SLT and SMT attended a conscious inclusion training.</p> <p>Furthermore, the monthly Latte and Learns provide an opportunity for learning and increasing awareness.</p>
Providing staff with a platform to provide feedback on equality, equity, and inclusion within organisation	An inclusion survey was carried out at the end of 2023. Staff can provide feedback on EEDI through the Equality Network Groups and the Colleague Forum.
Ensuring there is an active stance to combat and eliminate racism within the workforce and beyond	In addition to anti-racism statement on the website, an anti-racism policy was created. Furthermore, to ensure commitment to the VAWG Anti-Racism Charter an action plan was created, which is reviewed annually.
Ensuring there is an active stance to combat and eliminate ableism	<p>A number of external speakers have provided information and awareness on neurodiversity and disability through the Latte and Learns and all staff meetings.</p> <p>Additional disability and neurodiversity awareness training is planned for 2026.</p>
Ensure that D/deaf, neurodiverse, & disabled staff are able to receive continued support if they change roles	A field is being added to HR Hub to allow for employees and People Business Partners to add information on any existing reasonable adjustments in place for individuals.
Improve support to staff who request reasonable adjustments	A new Reasonable Adjustments policy which includes guidance on Access to Work is being created. We are also creating a page on HRHub so that visibility of agreed reasonable adjustments is improved for employees, managers and P&C.
Communication – internal and external – is inclusive and diverse	An inclusive language guide was created and EEDI resources are shared on EEDI SharePoint page. The Digital team continue to upgrade and improve website accessibility, particularly for readability and sight impairments

<p>Develop confident and empathetic managers & leaders who develop & support their teams</p>	<p>A Leadership Development Programme (LDP) was launched in February 2024. Inclusive leadership is part of the programme. The programme is currently under review, considering feedback and learning and engagement styles.</p> <p>The new LMS, launching 1 September, includes an EDI learning journey for staff.</p>
<p>Continue to consider accessibility within the work environment to combat ableism</p>	<p>A review of the accessibility of Impact or equivalent used by staff to take place 2026.</p>
<p>Take a stance against racism and other forms of discrimination against staff by service users</p>	<p>A Respectful Engagement policy has been created to provide guidance on how to support staff and volunteers who experience racism and/or discrimination from service users.</p>
<p>Staff data is current, up-to-date and provides a true reflection of diversity of staff</p>	<p>Further changes to HR hub now includes a tab on Social Mobility and a reminder to staff to update their details continue to be added to the P&C newsletters.</p>
<p>Ensure that any major changes to policies and procedures are inclusive and their impacts are positive</p>	<p>An equality impact assessment (EIA) form and guidance were created and have been used when required.</p>
<p>Make inclusion a central part of performance and development conversations</p>	<p>A EEDI section asking staff how they have been allies at work has been added to the performance management framework in June 2025.</p>

3. Centring service users and survivors at the heart of their services to ensure that their voices are listened to and heard, and ensuring we provide an inclusive and supportive service for all.

Objective	Actions
Ensure materials and resources provided to service users are inclusive	<p>Directories are provided by the community engagement team and services, culturally specific items, language specific services, monthly newsletters and community bulletin boards are provided in some refuges.</p> <p>Furthermore, staff focus groups were held to discuss what resources and materials could be improved for service users from an intersectional and EEDI lens.</p>
Build a culture that champions EEDI, compassion, and inclusive support of service users	<p>A variety of EEDI training has been made available, and we continue to develop new courses including LGBTQI+ experience of domestic abuse, British Sign Language, harmful practices,</p> <p>Work with the Vision Foundation, Blind Aid and Respect has provided training resources for staff to utilise.</p> <p>Children support workers receive training on supporting children with autism.</p>
Diverse range of survivor voices are heard	<p>In 2024 the Refuge Survivor Panel recruited six new members. In line with the survivor engagement team's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, the panel now includes over 50% Black and minoritised women and representation from LGBTQI+, disabled and migrant survivors. Furthermore, the Digital team have been working with Survivor Engagement team to proactively identify and seek missing voices.</p>
Consider the needs of all service users with regards to food and toiletry supplies	<p>A list of culturally specific items in refuges has been developed and is regularly shared with corporate partners looking to donate items for refuges. Culturally specific refuges regularly providing key culturally specific items for service users.</p>
Improve accessibility of existing properties for D/deaf, neurodiverse, and disabled service users	<p>The Property Services team have been supporting the Service Delivery directorate to improve access for residents with disability which has included adaptation of fire alarm, vibrating pillows and flashing lights to warn D/deaf users of danger.</p> <p>New self-contained dispersed accommodation in Warwickshire provide a unit with full wheelchair access and other units with step-free access.</p> <p>Routes to Support is being updated to include information on the accessibility of each refuge.</p>

	Furthermore, the Stay Safe East 'Shaping Our Lives toolkit' is being used to audit and improve the refuges for disabled service users.
Improve accessibility across all services	<p>Information has been provided to staff on assistive technology that can assist clients with disabilities. Adaptive technology items for refuges are under review and purchases in London can be made with the barriers to support fund.</p> <p>Additional adaptions for neurodiversity include a two-toned colour schemes and sensory room in a dispersed property and alarms for children who may try to leave properties.</p> <p>Changes were made to the Helpline website to ensure screen reader compatibility and improved keyboard accessibility.</p> <p>The Sign Health partnership is promoted within the refuges and there is BSL support for the helpline.</p> <p>The Digital team have been promoting our translation services and providing multi-language marketing of these services to help reach more survivors.</p>
Providing an inclusive environment for service users with mental health illnesses	Mental health first aid training is available in some local authorities. Focused mental health and trauma training and trauma-informed practice e-learning is available to staff. Co-locations with mental health services are developing pathways into Refuge's services.
Key religious and cultural events are marked	A range of faith and belief inclusion dates are marked in the refuges, including Christmas, Eid, Easter, Diwali, Hanukkah, Chinese New Year.
Ensure new and existing safeguarding procedures consider cultural, minoritized and religious communities	Information is included within Safeguarding Policies and Procedures and eLearning course. Furthermore, safeguarding procedures include cultural, minoritised and religious communities and a new section on conversion therapy has been added.

4. Embed EEDI beyond the workforce - through procurement, funding, and influence, ensure more of our partner organisations, suppliers, and funders have inclusion as a core value.

Objective	Action
Formally embed EEDI standards across all external relationships/partnerships	An EEDI pledge was created and shared with contractors, trainers, donors and ambassadors.
Representation matters - diverse range of celebrities speak on behalf of Refuge	<p>The past couple of years have seen new celebrities representing Refuge including Alex Scott, Chanita Stephenson (Black survivor/reality TV personality), Nikita Kanda (host of NNC Asian Network's breakfast show).</p> <p>In addition, a diverse range of talent have supported campaigns including Sharon Gaffka, Chanita and Saffron Hocking. When launching new appeals consideration is given to ensure representation.</p>
Ensure our campaigns are diverse and present issues that affect women and girls from marginalized communities	Refuge's campaigns continue to ensure that there is diverse representation of issues. For the Make it Mandatory campaign there were a diverse range of survivors and talent present when a petition was handed in to Downing Street.
Influence policy makers to consider intersectionality and discrimination	<p>Refuge's Victims and Prisoners' Act lobbying pushed for increased funding for community-based services and a dedicated 'by and for' funding pot.</p> <p>Refuge included a need for a 'by and for' funding pot in letters to new Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Govt.</p> <p>Refuge attempted to engage the Home Office immigration team on the move to eVISAs and the potential negative impacts on migrant survivors and have supported sector lobbying on a migrant victims domestic abuse concession.</p> <p>Refuge signed up to Imkaan and Karma Nirvana's general election manifesto and responded to the Government's Disability Action Plan.</p>
Contractors and consultants are diverse and reflective of the communities we work with	The Head of Property has been working towards attracting and working with more gender diverse building contractors and consultants

5. Develop existing partnerships with 'by and for' organisations and create new partnerships to ensure support in the VAWG sector is diverse and inclusive.

Objective	Action
Continue to work with other VAWG organisations to improve EEDI across the sector	<p>Refuge continues to be an active member of the London VAWG consortium and VAWG sector policy group working in collaboration with by and for led VAWG organisations.</p> <p>Refuge worked in partnership with Blind Aid and Respect to create and implement training to increase awareness and support for blind and visually impaired service users.</p> <p>Work was undertaken with Stonewall Housing to roll out training for front line staff on how to best support LGBTQ+ clients in safe accommodation</p> <p>The Digital team continue to work with sister organisations to uplift their awareness and fundraising campaigns</p>
Expand on working with 'by and for' organisations	<p>Refuge supported a business case to MOPAC to add new specialist partners Galop to Pan London Floating Support Service to provide support for LGBT+ survivors.</p> <p>Refuge was awarded funding from the Home Office VAWG specialist services fund to run a 2-year project in partnership with smaller 'by and for' orgs around tech-facilitated abuse.</p> <p>'By and for' VAWG organisations are being invited to all staff meetings to share information on their organisations and the issues affecting underrepresented individuals.</p>
Work with external organisations to learn lessons and embed best practice	<p>Refuge collaborated with DAC Office to re-establish the VAWG Sector Lived Experience Leads group which aims to connect people working on survivor engagement across the VAWG sector to deepen and share collective knowledge.</p> <p>Refuge shared knowledge of housing advocacy with smaller specialist organisations, as part of our leadership of the LVAWGC Strategic Safe Accommodation Working Group</p>
Support 'by and for' organisations to lobby for greater consideration of minoritized communities in policy making	<p>Refuge supported Southall Black Sister's sector letter to Home Office outlining negative impacts of migrant victims domestic abuse concession scheme.</p> <p>Support was pledged to Imkaan's and Karma Nirvana's general election manifesto.</p> <p>A new partnership project was funded by Lloyds Bank Foundation to support a coalition of by & for led VAWG organisations to influence MOPAC, London Councils and London boroughs to improve housing responses to survivors.</p> <p>Refuge supported Women for Refugee Women in successfully lobbying to retain the limit on the detention of pregnant women in the Illegal Migration Act. Support was also provided to the Latin American Women's Rights Service with analysis of the Lobbying Act to aid their campaign planning</p>

Continue to support the principles of the VAWG sector anti-racism charter	Refuge made a bid to MOPAC to add new specialist partner to Pan London Floating Support Service (Claudia Jones Organisation) to provide specialist support to Black Caribbean women. In addition, a VAWG Anti-Racism Charter action plan was created to ensure Refuge remains committed to the principles of the Charter.
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