

UNICEF UK EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION REPORT 2026

Overview

Our vision is an equitable, diverse and inclusive working culture that empowers and enables all our colleagues at The United Kingdom Committee for UNICEF (UNICEF UK) to deliver their best work for children.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) remains central to how UNICEF UK delivers on its mission. To achieve the best outcomes for children, our colleagues must experience a culture of dignity, respect and inclusion, and feel empowered to contribute and challenge where needed.

This report brings together insight from our 2025 Culture Survey and wider organisational data, including recruitment and progression data, pay gap reports, workforce diversity, evidence from EDI initiatives and colleague engagement, to understand how our EDI work is shaping colleagues' experiences.

It focuses on where we are seeing progress, where experience is less consistent, and what this means for the next phase of our work.



Melis (left), Senior Strategic Communications Planner and Nathalie, Senior Programmes Adviser.

What the evidence is showing us

Our EDI Approach is built on three levers: Power, Culture and Accountability. These are designed to shift attitudes, systems, behaviours and decision-making conditions over time.

Our 2025 Culture Survey, independently analysed by Fearless Futures, assesses our progress across four goals, as set out in our EDI Approach: Changing Power, Representing Diversity, Building Trust and Embedding EDI.

If EDI activity has been sustained, embedded and system-focused, we would expect to see changes in everyday experience, voice, psychological safety and access to tools, alongside changes in leadership practice, policy implementation and structural equity.

Taken together, the evidence shows a clear and consistent picture:

Everyday culture is a relative strength. Respect between colleagues, employee voice and access to inclusion learning are scoring highly and have been improving over time.

Progress is evident, but experiences remain uneven. Gender and racial equity show clearer improvement, while responses from disabled, LGBTQIA+ colleagues and those at the intersection of multiple identities including women of marginalised races, indicate less-positive experiences. Wider workforce and pay gap data also indicate that inequities in outcomes remain central to our EDI focus.

Our biggest opportunity – and responsibility – is strengthening structural trust. Questions around transparency in decision making and perceived fairness in how policies are applied are areas we need to move forward.

Our EDI infrastructure is increasingly embedded. Colleagues have strong access to learning, guidance and tools to support inclusive practice. Inclusion is increasingly understood as part of how we work, rather than something separate. The opportunity now is to ensure it is experienced consistently as fair, transparent and inclusive, especially in senior decision-making spaces.

The findings are supported by some encouraging shifts in outcomes. These include a notable reduction across all pay gaps, particularly for women and colleagues from the global majority (see our **Pay Gap Report 2025**) alongside a continued increase in diversity across the organisation.



Ranjit (left), Senior Public Relations Manager and Malusa, Media and Communications Manager.

The culture and conditions we are building toward

Since 2020, our approach has focused on building the foundations for long term, organisational-wide, sustainable change.

This has included:

- Moving from awareness-raising to building our practice through guidance, policies, learning and tools such as Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs).
- Treating culture as an operating system rather than a side programme.
- Putting lived experience, participation and psychological safety at the heart of inclusion.
- Gradually formalising EDI expectations and accountability beyond the EDI team.
- Widely embedding inclusion into systems, design, delivery and our external voice.

Crucially, we prioritised laying foundations: embedding inclusion in our values, co-creating a shared language, building confidence to speak up, supporting everyday inclusive behaviours and permission to challenge.

What we have strengthened

Strengthening everyday culture, voice and inclusion

We are seeing stronger experiences of respect, belonging and voice. Colleagues feel more able to contribute, challenge and engage with inclusion in their roles.

The Culture Survey indicates strong and improving scores for:

- Fairness and respect between colleagues.
- Feeling able to share different views with managers.
- Feeling heard and supported at team level.
- Women's reported voice has improved particularly strongly over time.

This aligns closely with where we've invested most deliberately:

- Building psychological safety and everyday inclusive behaviours.
- Learning on microaggressions, neurodiversity, race and trans inclusion.
- Normalising inclusive language, challenge and reflection.
- Embedding inclusion into performance outcomes and team practices.

Disrupting default power dynamics

There are signs that access to voice and influence is widening, including more positive feedback from more junior colleagues across several areas.

Two findings stand out:

- From entry level to manager roles, colleagues report more positive perceptions than heads of team and senior leaders across most questions.
- The racial identity of respondents did not influence sentiments, overall.

These can be seen as positive trends in the data that go against what we would often expect in wider organisational and societal norms.

Our EDI approach and work so far has intentionally focused on embedding more inclusive, participatory ways of influencing decisions by:

- Resourcing colleague networks as strategic partners.
- Involving lived experience and youth voice earlier in decision-making.
- Clarifying EDI roles, inclusion champions and strengthening participatory, co-designed ways of working.

Colleague networks have continued to play a critical role as part of our EDI infrastructure.

They generate creative, safe and brave spaces for colleagues to share lived experience, raise awareness and shape thinking. As well as building connection and visibility, networks act as a valuable source of insight, helping to inform our priorities and holding us to account on where experience is not yet equitable. This contribution has been instrumental in strengthening our collective understanding of inclusion and shaping a more inclusive culture across UNICEF UK.

What we have strengthened

Building confidence and capability to practise inclusion

Colleagues report strong access to learning, tools and support. This reflects our focus on enabling people to practise inclusion, not just understand it.

Colleagues report strong access to:

- Learning and support to improve inclusive practice.
- Tools to embed inclusion into everyday decisions and behaviours.

This reflects our decision to prioritise capability over awareness alone, through:

- Practical guidance and frameworks.
- Inclusive design and storytelling principles.
- Use of Equality Impact Assessments.
- Normalising learning rather than perfection.

Daniel, Principal
Humanitarian
Adviser



How our anti-racism programme has shaped the current cultural picture

Alongside our wider EDI work, our anti-racism programme has played an important role in shaping the cultural conditions reflected in the 2025 Culture Survey.

Key areas of focus included:

- Establishing shared anti-racist principles, language and organisational intent.
- Creating spaces for braver conversations about racism and anti-racism.
- Investing in learning and personal development to challenge racialised thinking.
- Supporting colleagues to practise anti-racism through everyday behaviours, not just values statements.
- Centring lived experience and qualitative insight alongside quantitative data.

These strands map closely to the Culture Survey findings indicating:

- Strong and improving sentiments on respect, peer relationships and voice.
- Increased confidence to speak up and challenge at team and manager level.
- More positive experiences reported by junior colleagues, suggesting some disruption of traditional hierarchy effects.
- More consistent experiences across racial groups in many areas of the survey.

The findings suggest that the programme has contributed meaningfully to the everyday cultural shifts we are seeing, particularly around psychological safety, language, confidence and peer level inclusion.

At the same time, the survey also highlights where the impact of the anti-racism programme has not yet fully translated into stronger trust in systems. This is most visible in terms of shared expectations on decision-making and consistency and fairness of policy application.

In this sense, the Culture Survey affirms that our anti-racism programme has helped shift norms, confidence and everyday behaviours. It also reinforces the need to accelerate the structural and leadership dimensions of anti-racism, through stronger accountability, governance and clarity in how decisions are made.

This does not suggest that race equity has been achieved, or that further change is unnecessary. Rather, it helps explain why cultural confidence and everyday inclusion have moved faster than trust in systems and leadership, underscoring the importance of the next phase of our EDI approach.

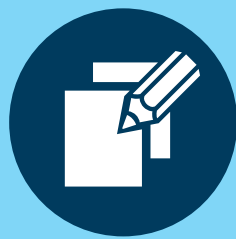
Our learning edges and biggest opportunities

The evidence highlights three clear priorities:



Strengthening trust in decision-making and leadership

Colleagues need greater clarity, transparency and consistency in how decisions are made and experienced at all levels of the organisation.



Improving consistency in how policies are applied

Policies and processes need to be applied more consistently so that experience aligns with intention.



Addressing unequal experience and outcomes

Targeted focus is needed to ensure that disabled, LGBTQIA+ colleagues and women of marginalised races experience progress more equitably.

What this means

This evidence reflects that we are evolving and building on real progress. We’re seeing strong signs of a more inclusive culture in how colleagues work together day-to-day, as well as positive outcomes in terms of improved pay-gaps, and an increasingly diverse workforce across all demographics. There’s also an opportunity to bring more consistency to how our structures, including leadership practice, accountability and policies are experienced, so we can build on and sustain these positive shifts.

What we will do next

Practical commitments and focus areas

The Culture Survey helps us see what to amplify and what to build next. We will treat these as practical commitments, and we will use our culture, workforce and pay gap data to track whether they are strengthening lived experience over time.

These actions form part of our ongoing commitment to the four goals set out in our EDI Approach, connecting what we are doing next with the longer-term change we are working to achieve.

1

Understand how we can make decision-making more transparent and understandable
Identify how we can be more transparent in decision-making, and explain more clearly what we decide, how we decide it, and what factors we considered, especially when options are constrained or outcomes are difficult.

2

Increase consistency in how policies and practices are applied
Build shared expectations and practical manager support so that good policy-design translates into consistently fair experience.

3

Make leadership accountability visible and meaningful
Define what inclusive leadership looks like at UNICEF, how it is supported, and how accountability is applied, so colleagues can see the link between values, decisions and outcomes.

4

Co-design targeted change where experience is poorest
Prioritise action with disabled, LGBTQIA+, women of marginalised races and other marginalised colleagues, centred on lived experience, and track whether the conditions for inclusion are improving in practice.

In summary

We have made important progress in building a more inclusive culture at UNICEF UK. Colleagues are experiencing stronger everyday inclusion, and we have created the foundations for long-term change.

The next phase is to ensure that this progress is experienced consistently, in how decisions are made, how systems operate, and how leadership is experienced, so that all colleagues can thrive and contribute to delivering a better a world for every child.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank brap and Fearless Futures for their ongoing support and partnership in advancing inclusion at UNICEF UK.



Sumit (left), Senior Strategic Planner and Frances, Director of Programmes.