BUSINESS
IN THE
COMMUNITY

GUIDE

RACE AT WORK CHARTER RESET

Understanding the
updated Race at Work
Charter commitments

CIPD

Contents

Introduction

With 30 years of action on race equality and ten years of evidence from Race at Work data, Business in the Community has reset the Race at Work Charter to reflect the evolving landscape and persistent inequalities still affecting many employees and jobseekers.

The Race at Work Charter was launched by Business in the Community (BITC) in 2018, building on more than two decades of campaigning for race equality in the workplace. It was developed in response to the findings of the McGregor-Smith Review and the Race at Work survey 2015 and 2018, which revealed significant disparities in how Black, Asian, Mixed Race and ethnically diverse employees were represented, supported and progressed in UK organisations.

It expanded to seven commitments following Race at Work 2021. Since its launch, the Charter has grown to over 1,000 signatories and has become a widely recognised framework for employer action on fairness and racial equality. Its commitments encourage organisations to take clear, practical steps to build inclusive cultures, develop representative pipelines, and tackle barriers to progression and belonging.

BITC's Race at Work 2025 survey with YouGov found that 53% of employees say there is at least one senior leader/champion who actively promotes equality and fairness at their organisation. This increases to 61% for large employers in the UK. In the light of this evidence, inclusive leadership has been embedded into each commitment of the Race at Work Charter.

The Charter Reset reflects the evidence from the BITC Race at Work 2025 survey. It includes a new Commitment One, **Leaders and employers support young people's pathways into good work and enterprise,** and updates to commitments six and seven.

Good work is defined by young people as:

"Good work means feeling valued, fulfilled and supported. It means being respected and treated fairly in a workplace that is diverse and inclusive, where there is open and honest communication and decent pay. Everyone should have a voice. Good work is done to a high standard and gives you a sense of achievement. It happens in a place where you can make change happen. Good work

protects your health and wellbeing. You're excited to tell your friends and family about good work, not because they ask but because you're proud of it".[1]

This updated guide is designed to help employees and employers understand what the seven Race at Work Charter commitments are and how they can be implemented meaningfully at every level of an organisation.

It draws on insights from BITC's Race Equality campaign, forums, consultations, bespoke academic thematic table discussions on inclusive supply chains, and our Talent Unlocked partnership with Youth Futures Foundation, the What Works Centre for youth employment in England.

In addition to these national insights, the campaign also recognises the vital role of organisations working across the devolved nations to support young people into employment.

In Scotland, **Inspiring Scotland** funds programmes helping young people into work. In Wales, **Youth Cymru** runs employability initiatives and advocacy. In Northern Ireland, the **YouthStart Consortium** delivers skills, confidence and digital inclusion programmes. Additionally, **The King's Trust** operates across all nations, supporting inclusive youth employment through devolved government partnerships.

Whether you are just starting your journey or looking to deepen your impact, this guide offers research-informed recommendations, resources and actions to help embed race inclusion into the everyday culture of your organisation.

The Race at Work Charter and how to meet the seven commitments

The Race at Work Charter exists to turn aspiration into action. It provides a practical framework for organisations to identify and remove the barriers faced by Black, Asian, Mixed Race and ethnically diverse people in the workplace, whether they are entering employment, progressing into leadership or growing their businesses through supplier relationships.

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[1] [Defining Good Work Research Summary](#)

Since 2018, the Charter has helped employers move beyond statements of intent to measurable action on race inclusion. Each commitment is grounded in evidence and data from the Race at Work YouGov surveys and real-world insights from champion employers, employees and BITC's Race Leadership Team.

The 2025 reset of the Charter strengthens this foundation. Its update to Commitment One for leaders and employers to support young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), encourages employers to look at the intersection of ethnicity and lower socioeconomic backgrounds. With the total number of young people who are NEET increasing to almost one million in 2025, there is an urgent need for employers to support the next generation of talent with fair access to work and enterprise to stop this negative trend.

The seven reset Charter commitments are:

1. Leaders and employers support young people's pathways into good work and enterprise
2. Capture ethnicity data and publicise progress
3. Commit at board level to zero tolerance of harassment and bullying
4. Inclusive leaders and managers ensure fair access to opportunities and development for everyone in their teams
5. Inclusive leaders take action that supports Black, Asian, Mixed Race and ethnically diverse employee career progression
6. Support employees to progress from allyship to solidarity
7. Include Black, Asian, Mixed Race and ethnically diverse-led small business founders and enterprise owners in supply chains

The seven Charter commitments encourage employers to:

- embed **inclusive leadership and accountability** across the organisation

- address structural barriers to **entry, progression, and development**

- encourage the use of **data, solidarity, and supply chain power** to drive long-term change

- centre **young people's pathways to employment**, recognising their role in the UK's economic future.

This guide breaks down each of the seven commitments and provides:

- clear explanations of what each commitment means

- why the action is needed, and who it benefits

- steps you can take individually and organisationally to make progress

- links to resources, frameworks and partner insights, including those from the Youth Futures Foundation through our Talent Unlocked partnership on the role of businesses to inspire, hire and support ethnically diverse young people to thrive.

Commitment One: Leaders and employers support young people's pathways into good work and enterprise

Young people aged 18–24, particularly those from ethnically diverse and lower socioeconomic backgrounds, face some of the most significant barriers to accessing secure, meaningful work or launching their own enterprise. The number of young people **not in education, employment or training (NEET)**[2] remains disproportionately high in these communities, with many young people experiencing multiple layers of exclusion from opportunity.

This commitment responds directly to this challenge. It calls on employers and leaders to take meaningful action to **remove barriers** and create **pathways into employment and entrepreneurship** for young people. These pathways must be structured, accessible, inclusive, fair, and sustained over time, not performative or short term.

What good work looks like
- Paid, quality internships as standard for early-career access: written objectives; named supervisor; structured learning plan; fair recruitment and pay.[3]

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[2] Youth Futures Data Dashboard

[3] Internships that work: Guide for employers | CIPD *pp. 6–9, paras 1–4.*

- Proportionate and inclusive pre-employment checks (only what's necessary for the role; avoid blanket exclusion; clear communication so candidates from under-represented groups aren't deterred).[4]
- Progression-ready roles that build skills and voice from day one (induction, learning time, team voice mechanisms), aligning to good work job-quality dimensions.[5]
- Recruitment and retention for marginalised young people, CIPD's Recruiting young people facing disadvantage: an evidence review[6] and retaining disadvantaged young people in work: an evidence review[7] provide guidance on this.

Why it matters

Young people from Black, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and other ethnically diverse backgrounds remain underrepresented in apprenticeships and early-career support programmes. These inequities limit not only individual opportunity, but longstanding workforce and economic resilience.

- The latest Office of National Statistics (ONS) figures show that nearly 1 million (948,000) young people are not in education, employment or training (NEET), equivalent to **one in eight young people**. Youth Futures Foundation's research shows that by matching the NEET rate of the Netherlands, which is leading the way within the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the UK could see 500,000 more young people in employment and a £69 billion boost to GDP.
- Apprenticeship start rates by ethnic group per 1,000 **young people aged 16–24** show stark disparities:
    - **31.8** for White young people
    - **22.6** for Pakistani
    - **17.3** for Bangladeshi

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[4] Pre-employment checks: Guide for organisations | CIPD *pp. 3–5, paras 1–3.*

[5] CIPD Good Work Index 2022: survey report

[6] Recruiting young people facing disadvantage: an evidence review

[7] Retaining disadvantaged young people in work: an evidence review | CIPD

- **12.8** for Black young people.[8]
- Apprentices from ethnically minoritised backgrounds aged 19–23 had an **achievement rate of 51.8%**, **versus 60.1% for White apprentices.**[9]
- The BITC Race at Work 2025 survey found that **only 35%** of employees said their organisation provides formal work experience for young people, with wide regional variation (39% in London vs 22% in Wales). SMEs were also less likely than large businesses to provide these opportunities (28% vs 41%).
- Appointing mentors to support apprentices could support young people to continue with the apprenticeship opportunity.

Supporting young people, especially those facing systemic barriers, requires leadership. Employers need to take action that is genuine, fair, based on what the evidence tells us works, and what young people say will help them.

Principles to lead by

Fairness starts with access to opportunities

Fair recruitment starts with recognising that young people from underrepresented groups may lack formal experience, networks or qualifications but not talent or potential. Pathways must level the playing field.

Leadership must be visible and accountable

Senior leaders must model their commitment by sponsoring initiatives, mentoring young people, resourcing early talent strategies, and tracking progress.

Support must be sustained

Work experience, mentoring and progression support should form a coherent journey into long-term employment or enterprise, not a disconnected set of one-offs such as career talks or workshops that begin and end without follow-up or a clear pathway forward.

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[8] To enable meaningful comparison of apprenticeship starts between ethnic groups, start rates were calculated per 1,000 individuals using the Annual Population Survey (APS) population estimates for people aged 16-24, part of the published estimates for all people in the working-age population (1664) in England (Jan-Dec 2023). See: Ethnic disparities and apprenticeship participation – qualitative research findings

[9] Achievement rates are derived from the DfE apprenticeships data, and refer to the proportion of apprenticeship leavers who successfully pass the whole framework or standard. See: Ethnic disparities and apprenticeship participation – qualitative research findings

Engagement must be community-informed

Employers should co-design solutions with those who understand the landscape including schools, colleges, local youth organisations and evidence-led experts like Youth Futures Foundation (YFF). Youth Futures is the national What Works Centre for youth employment, which provides evidence-based tools like the **Youth Employment Toolkit** to support effective action.

This is also a valuable opportunity to connect young people to your organisation's employee resource groups or networks. These internal communities can offer new starters mentoring, peer support and a sense of belonging from day one.

Practices to implement

Offer inclusive entry routes

Design apprenticeships, internships, and paid work experience programmes that actively reach and support young people who are NEET or from underrepresented communities. For example, BITC and Youth Futures Foundation have developed practical tools to support employers, including the **BITC Work Experience Brief & Work Experience Framework**, **BITC Top Tips for Impactful Apprenticeships** and Youth Futures' **Toolkit Unwrapped resources**. These resources help employers structure high-quality, inclusive entry routes that provide real value and progression for young people. Publish your internship standards (pay, supervision, learning objectives, recruitment steps) and report uptake/completion for under-represented groups annually.[10]

Use partnerships to extend reach

Collaborate with local skills initiatives and youth employment networks to open access to opportunity and co-deliver work placements and mentoring. For example, Careers Hubs, Local Skills Improvement Plans, Youth Futures Foundation networks, Youth Employment UK or Movement to Work.

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[10] CIPD Internships that Work: Guide for employers, pp. 10–13, paras 1–3

Mentor, coach and sponsor young people

Provide structured support as part of entry programmes helping young people to build workplace confidence, aspirations and a sense of belonging. For example, the **Grid for Good case study** from Youth Futures Foundation showcases how National Grid used structured mentoring and coaching to support young apprentices from ethnically diverse and lower socioeconomic backgrounds, demonstrating the long-term impact of targeted support. Guarantee learning time and voice for early-career employees (for example, protected learning hours, buddying and a first 90 days feedback loop) as part of good work commitments.[11]

Create inclusive recruitment and onboarding processes

Simplify application processes, focus on potential over experience, offer feedback and support young employees with tailored inductions, buddy systems and peer learning. For example, BITC's **Opening Doors** campaign encourages employers to remove barriers in recruitment and commit to more inclusive practices. The associated **Five Keys for Inclusive Recruitment** framework provides practical actions to help employers attract, assess and support diverse talent fairly.

CIPD's **Pre-employment checks guide** provides insights on reviewing screening steps (ID, right-to-work, qualifications, background checks) to ensure they're necessary, proportionate and relevant to the role and removing steps that create unnecessary adverse impact.[12] These resources are especially relevant when designing entry-level and early-careers pathways.

Embed accountability through leadership

Appoint an executive-level sponsor for early-careers inclusion and embed youth-focused metrics into broader workforce KPIs and D&I reporting. For example BITC's **Being a Visible Leader Toolkit** supports leaders to champion inclusive hiring, set measurable targets and track progress. This aligns closely with BITC's **Five Keys for Inclusive Recruitment**, which calls for visible leadership and data-driven action to remove bias and open up access.

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[11] CIPD Good Work Index 2022, p4, paras 1-3

[12] CIPD Pre-employment checks guide

Together, these resources help organisations embed inclusion from the top and ensure it's reflected throughout the recruitment journey.

Celebrate role models and success stories

Business in the Community's Race at Work surveys have found that ethnically diverse employees are more likely to have a career role model than those from White backgrounds (46% of ethnically diverse employees have a career role model vs 26% of White employees, increasing from 38% in 2021). Those who are ethnically diverse are also more likely to agree that a role model needs to be from the same background as them (35% of ethnically diverse employees vs 27% of White employees in 2025).

Give visibility to young people who thrive in your organisation. Representation matters, especially at the start of someone's journey. For example, leaders can feature early-career success stories, such as apprentices who complete mentoring schemes or succeed in promotion in internal communications, induction materials and social media; showing that inclusion and opportunity are embedded in your organisation's culture.

Commitment Two: Capture ethnicity data and publicise progress

This commitment responds directly to the need for transparency and accountability. It calls on employers to collect robust ethnicity data, set clear targets and report progress openly. Without reliable data, disparities remain hidden, making it harder to identify barriers, measure change and demonstrate the real-world impact of inclusion strategies.

Why it matters

Workplace equality can only be measured and improved when data is collected, analysed and acted on. Without a clear picture of representation and pay disparities, focused action cannot be taken to tackle the challenges, systems and policies that may include bias (for example, in appraisal and allocation of good work).

- **More organisations are capturing detailed data: 54% of employees** in large organisations say their employer captures ethnicity data by level in the organisation.[13]
- **Progress is being made but more is needed**: the percentage of employers publicly publishing their ethnicity pay gap has increased from **30% in 2020 to 44% in 2023.**[14]
- **A persistent transparency gap**: while **67% of employers** now monitor pay and ethnicity data, only **44% disclose it publicly**[15] showing that data collection is not yet matched with open reporting.

Capturing and publishing ethnicity data enables employers to set baselines, track change and target resources effectively. It also sends a clear signal to employees, stakeholders and the public that inclusion is not just a stated value, but a measurable priority.

Principles to lead by

Be transparent about purpose
Clearly explain why you are capturing ethnicity data, the benefits for employees and how it will be used to improve fairness, representation and progression.

Demonstrate commitment through action
Show visible evidence that leadership is acting on the data. Share examples of where insight has led to meaningful change in recruitment, development or progression outcomes.

Build trust through consistent communication
Regularly update employees on progress towards inclusion goals, using the data as a baseline. This could include reporting in newsletters and annual reports. Employees are more likely to provide accurate data when they understand how it will be used and see tangible actions resulting from it.

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[13] Breaking down the barriers to progression report

[14] Race at Work Charter Survey Report 2023

[15] Diverse and Inclusive Supply Chain Insights Report

Embed confidentiality safeguards

Reassure employees that their information will be protected, anonymised where necessary, and stored securely in line with data protection law. Be explicit about who will have access and how the data will be reported.

Prepare for mandatory reporting

With the UK Government's consultation on mandatory ethnicity pay gap reporting complete, legislation will be the next step. Organisations should take steps now to ensure their data is accurate and set up internal campaigns to increase declaration rates from employees.

Practices to implement

Data capture and analysis

Review existing data to ensure it is robust enough to measure the ethnic demographic of your employees accurately. Where gaps exist, introduce processes to collect the data consistently across recruitment, progression and pay. BITC's **Setting Goals and Measuring Progress Guide** sets out key data points and practical monitoring steps. Use the Government's ethnic group categories for consistency and comparability.

Carry out meaningful analysis to identify under-representation and pay disparities by level. The **CIPD's Ethnicity Pay Gap Report 2024** provides practical advice on preparing datasets, analysing trends, and protecting individual confidentiality.

Disclosure and trust

Employees are more likely to disclose personal data when they understand why it is being collected and how it will be used, and feel confident that it will remain confidential. Use a range of communication channels such as staff briefings, newsletters and intranet FAQs to explain the purpose of collecting ethnicity data, the safeguards in place and the tangible impact it will have on workplace inclusion. **A Guide for General Counsels – Ethnicity Pay Gap Reporting** provides additional advice for senior leaders on building trust and addressing legal considerations.

Reporting and action

Share how data has informed action, such as targeted recruitment, development programmes or sponsorship schemes for under-represented talent. Ensure reporting is

accompanied by a clear action plan to address findings. The **Race at Work Charter 2023: Commitment Two** report provides case studies from employers on turning data into measurable change.

Commitment Three: Commit at board level to zero tolerance of harassment and bullying

This commitment calls on employers to take decisive, sustained action to eliminate racial harassment and bullying. It requires visible leadership, robust policies and a culture of respect, ensuring all employees feel safe, valued and able to thrive.

BITC's Race at Work Survey 2025 found that **one in five ethnically diverse employees** (20%) reported having witnessed or experienced racial harassment or bullying from managers. More than 1 in 5 (22%) reported this from customers, clients, service users and contractors.

Why it matters

What do we mean by bullying, harassment, and microaggressions?

Harassment is defined under the Equality Act 2010 as:

"*Unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual*."

Bullying, while not legally defined, is described by Acas as:

"*Offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient*."

Microaggressions are subtle but harmful comments or behaviours (intentional or not) that reinforce stereotypes or exclusion. For example: "You speak really well for someone from your background."

These behaviours are not always loud or visible but they are deeply damaging. They can significantly affect an individual's mental and physical wellbeing, create hostile work environments, and reduce team performance and retention.

BITC's Race at Work 2025 YouGov survey found that:

- Ethnically diverse employees were about twice as likely as White employees to have witnessed or experienced racial harassment or bullying in the last two years. This included **managers (20% vs 11%), colleagues (27% vs 14%), customers or clients (30% vs 17%) and contractors (14% vs 5%).**
- **54% of employees** said they would be **more likely** to **report racial bullying** and **harassment** if they could do so **anonymously**, underlining the importance of accessible, confidential reporting mechanisms.

Youth Futures Foundation's **Discrimination and Work report** found that:

- **Nearly three-quarters of young people** who had experienced discrimination said they'd responded by looking for opportunities with other companies (73%) or even other industries (71%).
- The most frequently cited type of discrimination was based on ethnicity. **Three in five (59%) Black respondents** said they had faced workplace discrimination due to their ethnicity.
- **Almost 8 in 10 (79%) of young people** who experienced workplace discrimination did not formally report it and 69% of those who did not report their experience of discrimination said it was because they didn't believe it would make a difference.

Where leadership does not set a clear, zero-tolerance approach, discrimination can become normalised. While many employers have policies in place, the challenge lies in implementation. Taking a zero-tolerance approach means ensuring that your culture, leadership, policies and accountability structures all actively reinforce dignity and respect at every level.

Principles to lead by

Leadership must set the tone

Your board and executive team must clearly and publicly commit to a zero-tolerance approach and lead by example, making clear that harassment, bullying and microaggressions will not be tolerated.

Policies alone are not enough

To be meaningful, anti-bullying and harassment policies must be visible, understood, trusted and consistently enforced.

Clearly define and name harmful behaviour

Make it easier to recognise and call out harassment, microaggressions and bullying, including race-related 'banter', exclusion or insensitive remarks.

Respect is everyone's responsibility

Everyone in an organisation plays a role in creating a safe workplace but it starts at the top. Board-level ownership signals priority and ensures accountability.

Support must be visible and trusted

Employees need to know that if they speak up, they'll be supported. Peer champions and inclusive line management are key to building trust.

Practices to implement

Develop and communicate clear anti-bullying and harassment policies

These should define and explain unacceptable behaviours such as bullying, harassment, microaggressions and discriminatory 'banter' and outline how issues will be addressed. Make policies part of employee inductions, regular manager briefings and staff communications.

Run dignity and respect campaigns across the organisation

Internal campaigns framed positively can help define what respect looks like and why it matters. These campaigns can be co-designed with employee networks and peer groups. Youth Futures Foundation's **Employer Hub** demonstrates how translating evidence into workplace behaviour helps embed inclusive norms.

Equip people managers with tools to respond early and confidently

Provide training that builds confidence to address inappropriate behaviours, handling sensitive conversations. Encourage active listening and using restorative approaches to resolve conflict where appropriate and support employees who raise concerns. For practical guidance on preventing and handling workplace conflict, see **CIPD's Preventing and dealing with bullying and workplace conflict: Guide for managers**.

Establish anti-bullying or dignity-at-work champions

Train a visible group of peer supporters who can listen, signpost and support colleagues informally. This helps employees feel safer to speak up without going straight into a formal process. For example, the **Commitment Three: Charter Reset Briefing** recommends equipping local champions and allies to support affected colleagues and build team-level cultures of solidarity. These champions can help normalise speaking up and ensure zero tolerance is not just policy, but practice.

Embed zero tolerance into leadership accountability

Use a data dashboard to report on race-related grievance trends, employee sentiment and resolution timelines. Incorporate these into board-level reviews and leadership KPIs. Our **Being a Visible Leader toolkit** includes calls to action for senior leaders including tracking inclusion data and communicating commitments publicly.

Create accessible, confidential reporting mechanisms

Ensure that your grievance procedures are trauma-informed and easily accessible. For example, give employees choices in how to report concerns, use trained contacts who can provide a safe, supportive space, and avoid processes that may retraumatise the person involved. CIPD's **Managing conflict in the modern workplace** report provides practical advice on embedding informal and formal resolution approaches, supporting psychological safety and signposting support.

Commitment Four: Inclusive leaders and managers ensure fair access to opportunities and development for everyone in their teams

This commitment calls on leaders and managers to take ownership of inclusion, embedding fairness into daily practice so all colleagues can grow and thrive. It is about managers helping to unlock talent, build belonging and ensure equitable access to opportunity in their teams.

Why it matters

Fair access to career development is critical for retaining diverse talent and ensuring ambition turns into progression. Yet, persistent gaps remain. BITC Race at Work 2025 found:

- High ambition: 72% of Black, Asian, Mixed Race, and other ethnically diverse employees say career progression is important to them, up from 63% in 2015.[16]
- Increased demand for support: The proportion wanting mentoring has risen from 34% to 54%, and sponsorship from 27% to 48% over the last decade.[17]
- Evidence from Youth Futures Foundation's Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) on employer engagement with equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) shows that employers who intentionally and proactively prioritise creating inclusive environments have higher retention rates and job satisfaction.[18]
- A UK-based study found that organisations that prioritise EDI report significantly higher retention rates (60% or above), compared to those that do not prioritise EDI (below 50%).[19]
- Diverse decision-making bodies also promote fairer progression outcomes, as there is evidence showing that they are more likely to identify and address biases in promotion

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[16] *BITC Breaking Barriers to Progression, June 2025*

[17] *BITC Breaking Barriers to Progression, June 2025*

[18] *Opall (2021) cited in Youth Futures Foundation REA (2025)*

[19] *CMI 2024 cited IN Youth Futures Foundation REA (2025)*

scenarios. These bodies are more likely to recommend minority candidates for promotion, compared with more homogenous ones.[20]

Workplace inclusion needs fair, intentional and inclusive leadership. By embedding inclusion into everyday management, leaders can break down barriers, boost retention and unlock talent. This ensures that early-career employees, especially those navigating combined social and economic barriers and/or intersecting challenges, are recognised and supported to progress.

Principles to lead by

Inclusion requires intention and action
Move beyond statements of commitment to demonstrable, measurable change in access to opportunities. Leaders and managers must actively anticipate and remove barriers.

Ownership should be shared
Inclusion is everybody's responsibility and not just HR or Diversity, Equality and Inclusion teams. Every leader and manager should commit to ensuring fair and inclusive actions; for example, encouraging all employees to develop new skills.

Development must be visible
Growth opportunities from stretch assignments to coaching should be accessible to all. Progress should be monitored through KPIs, appraisals and leadership dashboards.

Listen and act
Actively seek and respond to feedback from diverse team members to remove barriers, build trust, and drive change.

Practices to implement

Embed inclusive leadership in daily practice
Leaders and managers should actively build belonging in their teams making fair, inclusive decision-making part of daily practice. This includes fair access and distribution of

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[20] Bowan Williams (2018) cited in Youth Futures Foundation (2025)

opportunities, transparent communication and role modelling inclusion. For example, BITC's **How to be a Visible Leader Toolkit** supports leaders to champion inclusion, lead by example with their behaviours and create team cultures where all employees, including those early in their careers, can thrive.

Make fair access measurable and accountable

Set and track clear KPIs on access to training, stretch projects and promotion pathways. Integrate inclusion into job descriptions and appraisals as a competency, tested in recruitment and assessed in performance reviews. BITC's **Five Keys for Inclusive Recruitment** provides practical, measurable actions to reduce bias and open opportunities from the point of hire, enabling employers to track progress on fair access to opportunities throughout the employee lifecycle.

Provide tailored and transparent career development pathways

Offer structured career development routes for early-career employees, especially those from ethnically diverse and lower socioeconomic backgrounds. This could include mentoring, micro-projects, shadowing, stretch assignments and tailored training that builds confidence and progression skills aligned with an individual's strengths and aspirations. Check in regularly on learning goals, track milestones and celebrate growth. Resources that can support this include the **Skills Builder Universal Framework 2.0** which defines, measures and develops essential transferable skills for all levels and BITC's **Mentoring, Sponsorship and Coaching Framework** that provides guidance on two-way mentoring and structured sponsorship to support career progression.

Cultivate safe spaces, feedback mechanisms and visible role models

Create a regular feedback culture through team surveys, focus groups and one-to-ones, giving underrepresented and early-career employees a safe space to share their experiences of inclusion and progression.

Be transparent about the changes you make in response to feedback to build trust and show accountability. Use team meetings or learning circles to share success stories and personal insights. Celebrate employees who progress through inclusive pathways, showing that opportunity and belonging are real in your organisation. CIPD's **Building Inclusive**

Workplaces guidance offers practical steps for embedding feedback mechanisms and showcasing success to strengthen inclusion.

Commitment Five: Inclusive leaders take action that supports Black, Asian, Mixed Race and ethnically diverse employee career progression

This commitment calls on leaders to actively dismantle barriers to career progression that disproportionately affect Black, Asian, Mixed Race and ethnically diverse employees, as well as those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. It's about ensuring that career advancement is not just dependent on informal networks or chance but built on transparent pathways, fair access to opportunities and visible sponsorship. Supporting progression from entry level through to leadership strengthens retention, boosts innovation and ensures organisations make the most of all their talent.

Ensure fair access to development opportunities including two-way mentoring, sponsorship, coaching, skills development and career progression planning for young and entry-level employees.

Why it matters

BITC's **Breaking Barriers to Progression report** highlights that while ambition is high among ethnically diverse employees, organisational barriers limit career advancement. The report found:

- **1 in 3 UK workers** see lack of opportunities as the biggest barrier to career progression with ethnically diverse employees consistently more likely to report this than White counterparts.
- The desire for mentoring among ethnically diverse employees has grown from **34% in 2015 to 54% in 2024**, compared with **39% of White British employees**.
- Interest in sponsorship, where a senior leader actively advocates for someone's career, has **risen from 27% to 48% among ethnically diverse employees** between 2015 and 2024, compared with **28% for White British employees**.

BITC's Race at Work 2025 YouGov Survey found that **four in five** (**81%)** of those who have a mentor agreed that having access to a mentor helps them achieve what they want, up from 73% in 2021.

Principles to lead by

Recognise ambition and remove bias
Acknowledge that ethnically diverse employees often have high career aspirations but face bias in access to stretch opportunities, recognition of talent and good work. Actively challenge assumptions about capability or 'fit' to ensure fair access to opportunities.

Make progression pathways visible and supported
Support employees (especially those joining in junior positions) to map career routes and share the criteria for advancement, supported by mentoring and sponsorship. Pairing visible role models with active advocates helps employees navigate, explore and access opportunities for progression.

Equip managers to enable career growth
Train and encourage line managers to have constructive career conversations, identify skills gaps and connect employees with tailored development opportunities.

Hold leaders accountable for outcomes
Track and report on progression by ethnicity, ensuring leaders are assessed on inclusion in their teams – employee survey results can support with this. Leaders should also be reviewed on how well they support diverse talent to develop. A review of the number and quality of project and stretch opportunities distributed across a team and who is given access to them can be a useful indicator of fair and equitable access to opportunities given to employees.

Practices to implement

Build fair access to development opportunities
Review all development pathways from induction and training programmes to stretch projects and leadership opportunities to ensure ethnically diverse employees, including those at early-career stages, can access them fairly. CIPD's **Talent management guide** helps

ensure inclusion is central to talent strategies, providing guidance on enabling inclusive access to opportunities in the organisation.

Embed sponsorship, mentoring and coaching into development culture

Embed mentoring, sponsorship and coaching into schemes to support ethnically diverse employees' progression. For junior employees and new starters, ensure that schemes are structured, measurable and linked to concrete development milestones. Track participation and outcomes to guide continuous improvement. Senior leaders should actively sponsor ethnically diverse employees, advocating for their progression and modelling inclusive behaviours. BITC's **Mentorship, Sponsorship and Coaching framework** provides ideas for structured approaches for senior leaders to use sponsorship as a tool for unlocking progression opportunities.

Develop inclusive line management and career support

Provide guidance for managers to facilitate career conversations, identify and nurture diverse talent and support progression planning with tailored coaching and skill development. Encourage leaders to model inclusivity through their behaviour and actions. To strengthen managers' abilities to support diverse career progression, you could refer to CIPD's **Building inclusive workplaces guide**, which contains practical guidance on how line managers can foster inclusion through fair development, unbiased performance conversations and inclusive feedback methods.

Track progression data and celebrate success

Measure progression outcomes including promotions, leadership pipeline development and participation in development opportunities by ethnicity, gender, and socio-economic background. Share metrics internally and celebrate employees who progress through inclusive pathways, showcasing what success looks like, including spotlighting any external awards and recognition of achievements.

This transparency reinforces trust, accountability, and aspiration. For example, the BITC **Race at Work Charter 2023: Commitment Five report** revealed that while **60%** of organisations track progression into senior roles for ethnically diverse staff, **only 38%** review promotion shortlists by ethnicity. This indicates clear scope to improve transparency and action. CIPD's **People Analytics Factsheet** can assist in designing these tracking systems effectively.

Commitment Six: Support employees to progress from allyship to solidarity

This commitment recognises that allyship is only the starting point. To create lasting change, there is a need to move from saying 'I support you' to saying 'I'm with you' , ensuring that inclusion is backed by visible leadership, transparent accountability and peer-to-peer responsibility. Solidarity builds trust, fosters belonging and demonstrates that organisations are committed not just to words, but to action inside the workplace and in the wider community. Employers play a key role in giving their people the tools and confidence to turn good intentions into meaningful, consistent action.

Why it matters

Allyship has been an important starting point in building inclusive workplaces, but as we progress it is clear that allyship alone is not enough. Employees are calling for clearer guidance and practical tools to take meaningful action. BITC's Race at Work 2025 YouGov survey found that **over half of employees (52%) want support** from their employer to stand in greater solidarity with ethnically diverse colleagues. There are also strong generational differences: **69% of 18–24 year olds** said they want employer support to show solidarity, compared to just **31% of those aged 55+.**

Solidarity is about consistently standing with Black, Asian, Mixed Race and ethnically diverse colleagues, actively challenging bias, addressing exclusion, promoting inclusion at every level and driving change within teams, organisations and wider communities. The **From Allyship to Solidarity guide** highlights that meaningful solidarity requires sustained action, accountability and the courage to challenge exclusionary behaviours, policies and practices whenever they arise.

Principles to lead by

Drawing on CIPD's Good Work Index (2022)[21] and BITC's insights, three core principles can guide employers to progress from allyship to solidarity.

Sponsor don't just support

Leaders and managers commit to sponsorship (opening doors to stretch work, networks, and progression) and publish criteria for access. This maps to "fair opportunities for learning and progression" within good work. Making solidarity visible also means leaders should actively call out discrimination, demonstrate allyship in meetings, and amplify ethnically diverse voices in decision-making forums.

Enable: empower voice and safety

Employees are equipped with tools and confidence to speak up and challenge exclusionary behaviours. Safe forums are created, where employees feel able to share experiences both in the workplace and in response to wider events that affect communities. Teams adopt structured voice mechanisms (for example, pulse surveys, listening groups) and act on issues raised. Respectful treatment and inclusion are measured in local action plans, mapping to "employee voice and representation" and "health and wellbeing" elements of good work.

Act collectively inside and outside the workplace

True solidarity extends beyond the workplace into the wider community. Employers encourage employees to engage in volunteering in community initiatives, celebrate role models and recognise achievements, and stand with underrepresented groups in wider society, not just within organisational walls.

Practices to implement

Build awareness and advocacy

Equip employees with the tools and knowledge to move from allyship into solidarity through targeted training and resources. For example, BITC's **Antiracism and Allyship in the Workplace toolkit** provides practical steps for developing ally behaviours. The **Allyship to**

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[21] CIPD Good Work Index 2022: survey report, p3-4

Solidarity Supporting Tools provides ideas on how these can be translated into daily workplace actions. These resources are to help organisations with suggestion actions to avoid performative gestures to build sustained, active solidarity that complements broader inclusion work such as career progression.

Facilitate and sustain peer-to-peer networks and safe spaces

Solidarity is demonstrated by opening doors and sharing influence and can be nurtured through peer relationships. Employers can support this by creating and sustaining networks (with resources and support), dialogue spaces, or convening solidarity circles where employees can share lived experiences and provide mutual support. For example, BITC's **Black Talent Allyship toolkit** offers practical advice for developing spaces where ethnically diverse talent is supported and championed.

Equip leaders and managers to model solidarity

Inclusive leadership behaviour is central to creating a culture of belonging and progressing allyship into solidarity. Providing managers with training on inclusive behaviours, coaching skills, and how to sponsor talent, helps embed solidarity into everyday management. The CIPD's **Building inclusive workplaces report** highlights that inclusive cultures are sustained when leaders consistently call out bias and model fairness. BITC's **Antiracism and Allyship in the Workplace toolkit** reinforces that managers should be trained to actively listen, advocate for colleagues and use their influence to champion underrepresented talent.

Track progress and celebrate role models

Measure employee experiences of belonging, fairness, and inclusion through tools such as pulse surveys segmented by ethnicity and socioeconomic background. BITC's **Allyship to Solidarity Supporting Tools** will provide employers with practical methods to track impact and identify gaps. Publicly celebrate success stories such as cross-cultural mentoring, solidarity initiatives led by Employee Resource Groups, or employees challenging bias. Reinforce positive behaviours and encourage wider participation. Celebrate those who lead by example by spotlighting employees who progress through inclusive pathways in your internal communications, events, or external campaigns. This makes solidarity visible and inspires others to act.

Extend solidarity beyond the workplace

True solidarity goes further than internal advocacy; it connects organisations with communities and wider systems of change. Encourage employees to demonstrate solidarity not only within the workplace but also in the communities where organisations operate. For example, employers can align with local campaigns, support Black and ethnically diverse-owned SMEs through inclusive procurement and encourage staff to volunteer their skills. The **BITC Diverse and Inclusive Supply Chain Insights Report** shared that only **47% of employees** within large businesses reported that their organisation encourages them to use their skills to support small organisations on a voluntary basis.

BITC's place-based approach shows how businesses can collaborate with local partners to promote fairness, equality and inclusion beyond their walls. Volunteering initiatives, mentoring schemes and partnerships with grassroots community organisations extend solidarity into action, showing that belonging and fairness are organisational values that when fully embraced in the workplace can influence how we live together in local communities too. By linking internal actions with external partnerships, employers demonstrate that solidarity is an ongoing, collective responsibility.

Commitment Seven: Include Black, Asian, Mixed Race and ethnically diverse-led small business founders and enterprise owners in supply chains

This commitment recognises that supply chains are powerful levers for inclusion. By intentionally including Black, Asian, Mixed Race and ethnically diverse-led enterprises, employers can share opportunities and address persistent barriers such as fair payments, complex procurement processes, and unequal access to contracts. Embedding inclusion into procurement builds stronger, more resilient supply chains, demonstrating leadership in driving lasting change and increasing economic inclusion.

Why it matters

Inclusive supply chains are powerful drivers of economic growth and community impact. Evidence indicates that tackling the barriers facing ethnic minority-led businesses could raise

the annual Gross Value Added (GVA) contribution from £25 billion to £100 billion.[22] Embedding this principle in procurement turns buying power into measurable economic impact.

BITC's **Diverse and Inclusive Supply Chains Insights Report** highlighted that **48% of procurement employees** report that their organisation has a senior leader who actively promotes equality and fairness in procurement practices.

While many employers recognise the importance of engaging diverse suppliers, few currently track spend, contract value or payment terms**.**

Principles to lead by

Design procurement with inclusion in mind

Procurement systems must be simplified, transparent and responsive to the realities of small and diverse-led businesses. Embedding fair, transparent and proportionate processes can help to level the playing field. Processes should be streamlined, clearly set out step by step and flexible enough to accommodate enterprises with limited administrative capacity.

Embed fairness and accountability

Commitment to inclusive supply chains must be visible and led from the top. Senior leaders should actively include diverse founders in the supply chain, embed fairness within procurement strategies and connect progress in this area to broader business accountability. They should actively explore opportunities to reduce risk by increasing the diversity of suppliers.

Champion diversity as a driver for innovation and resilience

Diverse suppliers can contribute fresh perspectives, innovative ideas and stronger connections to communities and markets. Their success depends on access to new business opportunities, wider networks and the knowledge and practical tools to enable growth and build sustainable infrastructures within their organisations. Employers can play a critical role by investing in supplier development through sharing training materials, mentoring and

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[22] Time to change: a blueprint for advancing the UK's ethnic minority businesses

participating in peer-to-peer networks to support smaller suppliers. Foster genuine, long-term partnerships rather than short-term, transactional relationships for the delivery of a single short-term contract.

Build partnerships that extend impact

Employers should collaborate with peers, industry bodies, and community networks to open pathways for diverse-owned businesses. Strong partnerships have the potential to amplify impact, provide capacity-building opportunities and help create a more inclusive business ecosystem. Economic inclusion is strengthened when corporates commit to enduring relationships, multi-year commitments, fair financing arrangements and accessible contract structures that foster business growth and resilience, enabling diverse suppliers to thrive.

Practices to implement

Set clear targets and monitor supplier diversity

Employers should track the representation of diverse-led suppliers across their contracts and procurement pipelines. For example, BITC's **Ethnically Diverse-Led Business Owners in Supply Chains toolkit** provides practical steps for setting benchmarks and building monitoring systems. Expanding monitoring practices ensures progress is measurable and visible.[23]

Ensure fair and timely payment practices

Small, diverse-owned businesses often face cashflow challenges due to delayed payments or inflexible contract terms. Fair and prompt payment terms are critical for small and diverse-owned businesses. BITC's **Diverse and Inclusive Supply Chains Insights Report** states that **9% of ethnically diverse small business leaders** have been denied finance or funding, from sources such as banks, venture capitalists or investors compared to only **5% of their White counterparts**. This leaves them more vulnerable to cashflow pressures when payments are delayed, underlining that timely payment is essential to supplier resilience.

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[23] Ethnically Diverse-Led Business Owners in Supply Chains

Invest in supplier development and capacity-building

Diverse founders frequently report difficulties accessing corporate networks, finance, and mentoring. Employers can respond by offering supplier development programmes, mentoring circles, and procurement readiness workshops.

Leverage networks to broaden access

Diverse suppliers thrive when introduced into wider ecosystems of buyers, investors, and peers. Employers can join or sponsor business forums, partner with chambers of commerce, and co-host networking events to extend opportunities. Engaging networks ensures diverse-owned suppliers are not overlooked and helps businesses build ecosystems of innovation and resilience.

Simplify access and reduce barriers in procurement

Small and diverse-owned businesses often describe procurement as overly complex and resource-intensive. Employers could simplify processes, break down large contracts into smaller lots, and provide clear guidance and feedback.

Showcase diverse supplier success stories

Success stories and role models not only inspire young people and communities but also encourage other suppliers to participate. For example, employers and leaders can spotlight supplier-led innovations or local business founders in internal and external communications.

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