

Social Inclusion Annual Report

2024-2025

**This is University of Warwick.
This is Beyond.**

warwick.ac.uk/socialinclusion



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Introduction.

In 2025, as global divisions grow more visible, it is important that we at Warwick continue to work to build a university where diversity is embraced and inclusion is lived every day. Our Social Inclusion strategy is central to this mission, recognising the richness of our differences while celebrating the values that connect us. We are creating an educational and research environment that welcomes talent from every corner of the UK and the world, and nurtures it to flourish.

We are proud of the progress we've made—and we remain open to learning and improving. Our strategy is not just about policy; it is about people. It is also about leadership at every level. While the Social Inclusion team leads the strategy, success depends on the active partnership of colleagues across the university. Together, we are shaping a culture where inclusion is not an add-on, but a core value.

The establishment of our Strategic Social Inclusion Committee will help us to engage senior leaders in shaping the direction of our strategy. This committee ensures that inclusion is championed at the highest levels and embedded into decision-making across our institution.

We've completed the staff consultation and engagement review, which has created a forum where more voices can be heard. This platform will enable colleagues to engage directly with the issues that matter most on the ground, helping us to build a strategy that reflects lived experiences and fosters shared ownership.

This year, we've seen powerful examples of inclusive leadership in action—from initiatives supporting neurodiverse students to the development of the Building Belonging Framework. These efforts were celebrated at our Social Inclusion Conference, where leadership and innovation were recognised across the university, including a lifetime achievement award for our former Provost, Emeritus Professor Chris Ennew.

We are also investing in the future of inclusive leadership. Through the launch of EmpowerUS and Accelerate, we are growing a diverse talent pipeline and fostering a culture where everyone can thrive. These programmes reflect our commitment to developing leaders who champion equity, create opportunity, and inspire change.

Our renewed status as a Sanctuary University reinforces our global outlook and our commitment to supporting refugees in higher education. We also celebrate the outstanding work of our student volunteer group, STAR, whose contributions to supporting refugees and asylum seekers were recognised in the Warwick Awards for Public and Community Engagement.

At Warwick, building diversity and inclusion is not just a goal—it's a responsibility. And through collective leadership, we are creating a university that reflects the best of society: open, inclusive, and united in purpose.

We hope you enjoy reading this year's review.



Kulbir Shergill, Director of Social Inclusion, and Stuart Croft, Vice Chancellor.

About us.

At Warwick, we thrive on difference.

Since inception Warwick has identified the need to increase access to higher education; the Social Inclusion Strategy is reimagining this original purpose.

We are pointing the way ahead on this agenda and developing diverse and inclusive citizens and leaders for today and tomorrow. We are a university known for challenging conventions with tenacious curiosity and open-minded thinking, and our social inclusion work reflects this.

The Social Inclusion Team

The Social Inclusion team leads Warwick's institutional approach to creating a more diverse and inclusive community.

We research and analyse key challenges and opportunities, formulate strategies and interventions to drive progress against the University's KPIs, and set performance targets to track our impact. We advise the Social Inclusion Strategy Committee and senior leadership on key decisions, ensuring social inclusion is embedded in Warwick's vision and operational priorities.

We achieve this by:

- Collaborating with departments and the leadership of related strategies, such as Education and Student Experience and Research, to understand challenges and provide strategic advice.
- Designing and piloting innovative projects to facilitate change.
- Delivering and commissioning training to create inclusive cultures across the University.
- Creating guidance and policies to support institutional goals.

Vision:

We aspire to remove economic, social, and cultural barriers that have prevented people from working, studying, and succeeding at Warwick, and to be recognised as best in class in our approach to equality, diversity, and inclusion, for staff and students by 2030.

Objectives:

1. Increase the diversity of Warwick's staff and students to maximise the creativity and innovation of its talent.
2. Develop a culture that supports students and staff in achieving their potential.
3. Become an internationally recognised leader in social inclusion.

KPIs:


Our Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) have been identified to support social inclusion. These KPIs provide a benchmark aspiration and help us understand how our processes and practice are implemented, giving us a clear measure of where we are making strides and where we must focus more effort.

We are seeing progress in several areas, such as an increase in women professors and professional services leaders, growth in the proportion of disabled staff in senior roles, and a higher proportion of Black professors compared to the sector. We have the most racially diverse undergraduate student community in the Russell Group (outside of London) and our most disadvantaged students (eligible for free school meals) have some of the best graduate outcomes in the Russell Group. Our awarding gap between Black and White students, while still too high, remains smaller than the sector average, showing the impact of targeted action.


Widening Participation:

- **Target:** Increase the proportion of entrants from the lowest socio-economic status groups (IMD quintile 1) to 13.4%.
- **Current:** 9.5%.


Black Awarding Gap

- **Target:** Eliminate the awarding (degree outcomes) gap between Black and White students.
- **Current:** 15 percentage points. Warwick is performing better than the sector in this area.
- **Change:**  Increasing since the target was set in 2018.


Gender Pay Gap

- **Target:** Eliminate the gender pay gap.
- **Current:** 21.9% Mean / 18.6% Median.
- **Change:**  Decreasing since the target was set in 2018.



Ethnicity Pay Gap

- **Target:** Eliminate the ethnicity pay gap.
- **Current:** 11.5% Mean / 13.3% Median.
- **Change:**  Increasing since the target was set in 2018.


Gender at FA9

- **Target:** 50% women professors and professional services staff at FA9.
- **Current:** 29.6% Academic / 49.5% Professional Services.
- **Change:**  Increasing since the target was set in 2018.


Ethnicity at FA9

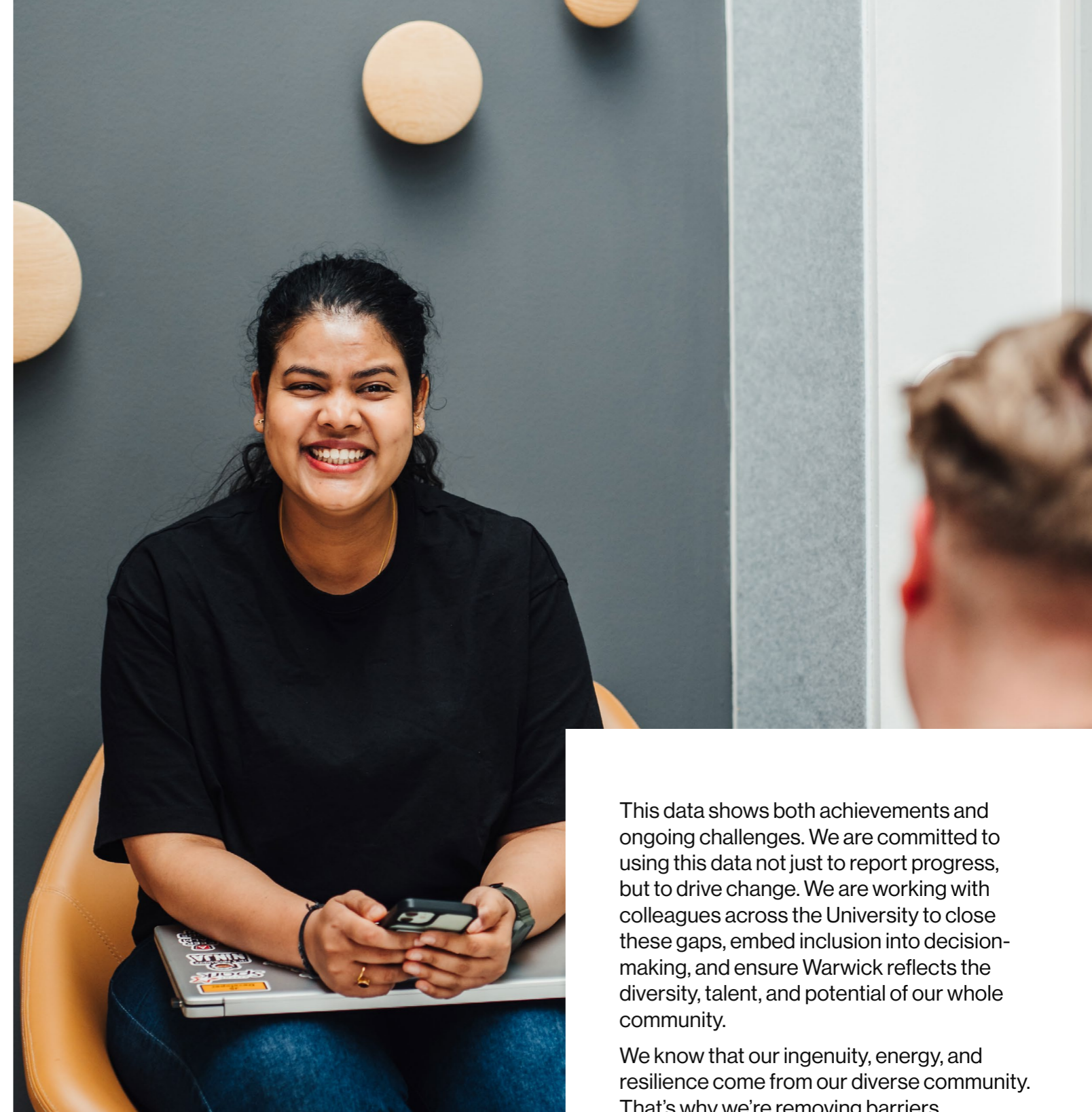
- **Target:** 25% Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic professors and professional services at FA9.
- **Current:** 11.7% Academic / 12.3% Professional Services. The proportion of Black professors at Warwick is higher than the sector.
- **Change:**  Increasing since the target was set in 2018.
 Increasing since the target was set in 2018.

Disability at FA9

- **Target:** 18% disabled professors and professional services staff at FA9.
- **Current:** 6.4% Academic / 5.7% Professional Services.
- **Change:**  Increasing since the target was set in 2018.

Sexual Orientation at FA9

- **Target:** 7% professors and professional services staff at FA9 who are LGBTQUIA+ by sexual orientation by 2030.
- **Current:** 3.6% Academic / 3.8% Professional Services.
- **Change:**  Increasing since the target was set in 2018.



Closing the Pay Gaps - Report

The pay gap is the difference in hourly pay between the total population of one group and another. In our **pay gap annual report**, we provide information on the gender, ethnicity, disability, and sexual orientation pay gaps at the University.

This data shows both achievements and ongoing challenges. We are committed to using this data not just to report progress, but to drive change. We are working with colleagues across the University to close these gaps, embed inclusion into decision-making, and ensure Warwick reflects the diversity, talent, and potential of our whole community.

We know that our ingenuity, energy, and resilience come from our diverse community. That's why we're removing barriers, changing the ways things are done, nurturing diverse talent, and building belonging. We go beyond the bounds of legislative practice and regulatory requirements to provide an inclusive experience of outstanding academic and professional growth at the University for our students and staff.

Keep reading to find out how...

The action we're taking.

Over the past year, we have made significant progress on our journey toward greater inclusion.

This report shares some of the key highlights, showcasing both the work led by the Social Inclusion team and the wider efforts across the University to embed inclusion into our everyday practices.

Diversity

Through our Social Inclusion Strategy, the Social Inclusion team is leading Warwick's ambition to increase the diversity of our staff and students.

We know that diversity of thought leads to innovation and creativity by bringing fresh challenge to ways of thinking and doing things. Over the past year, we have been working to break down barriers to diversity, delivering programmes and guidance that supports people to access and participate in work and study at Warwick.

Empowering, Accelerating, and Inspiring Diverse Talent

The Social Inclusion team is creating pathways for talented staff who are under-represented in higher education leadership. Through targeted programmes at every career stage, we are developing a pipeline of diverse and inclusive leaders.

"I am excited to continue the journey at Warwick to support a new kind of leader. Leaders who are inclusive, reflect the diversity of our communities, challenge traditional practices and inspire others to help us achieve our 2030 strategic objectives."

Stuart Croft, Vice-Chancellor



EmpowerUs

A personal development programme for grades 4, 5, and 6 staff who face barriers to their career development. EmpowerUs equips participants with the knowledge and skills to address the unique challenges they face. The programme also includes inclusive leadership development for managers, preparing them to become catalysts for change

So far, 46 staff members and their managers have participated in this programme and its pilot (EmpowerHer), and the feedback highlights the engaging in-person sessions, the safe space for thought-provoking discussion and reflection, and the valuable opportunity to network and benefit from peer support.

"I would recommend this programme to other colleagues across the University. The course has opened my eyes to new perspectives and hidden challenges; most importantly it has helped to identify ways I can support others in overcoming these."

Monica Sounderraj, WMG.

"The supportive network of peers, mentors and facilitator combined with a focus on authentic leadership and overcoming systemic barriers, made it truly empowering. It's a must for anyone looking to grow as a leader in an inclusive and meaningful way."

Megan Caulfield, Dean of Students Office.

Accelerate

A strategic programme designed to bridge the diversity gap at grade 9 by supporting the next generation of leaders at grades 7 and 8 who have face barriers to senior leadership positions. Accelerate enables high-potential talent from under-represented groups to explore and develop their leadership capabilities. The programme also includes inclusive leadership development for managers, engaging them to support the development of their staff, ensuring a holistic approach to leadership growth.

Our first Accelerate cohort of 20 participants and their managers has now completed, and the feedback highlights the empowering emphasis on authentic leadership, confidence building, and the opportunity to reflect on values, leadership style, and career direction.

INspire

A programme beyond leadership development, supporting leaders at grade 9 who face well documented barriers getting into top leadership positions. INspire gives participants the opportunity to explore their unique identity as a leader and plan career paths.

So far, 49 staff members have participated, and the feedback highlights the opportunity for developing valuable cross-institutional connections and the coaching providing clarity on career goals and confidence in leadership. After the programme, participants said they were more confident and applied systems thinking, leadership skills, and personal values in practice.

"The INspire programme gave me the skills to develop and reflect as a leader, growing in confidence. The coaching and networking opportunities have proved invaluable. Through the programme I met colleagues from across the university that I may otherwise never have had the opportunity to meet, work, bond and laugh with. These connections are invaluable for each of us personally, but also to ensure the continued smooth and successful running of the university."

Caroline Elliott, Professor of Economics; Academic Director, Social Sciences Connect Programme; Member of the Government Regulatory Policy Committee.



Supporting Safe Travel Overseas

The Social Inclusion team have introduced new **Safe Overseas Travel Guidance for Staff with Protected Characteristics** to support staff who may face additional risks when travelling abroad in connection with their role at the University.

The guidance is designed to help staff understand potential risks they may encounter in certain regions, and how to plan and travel as safely as possible. It includes:

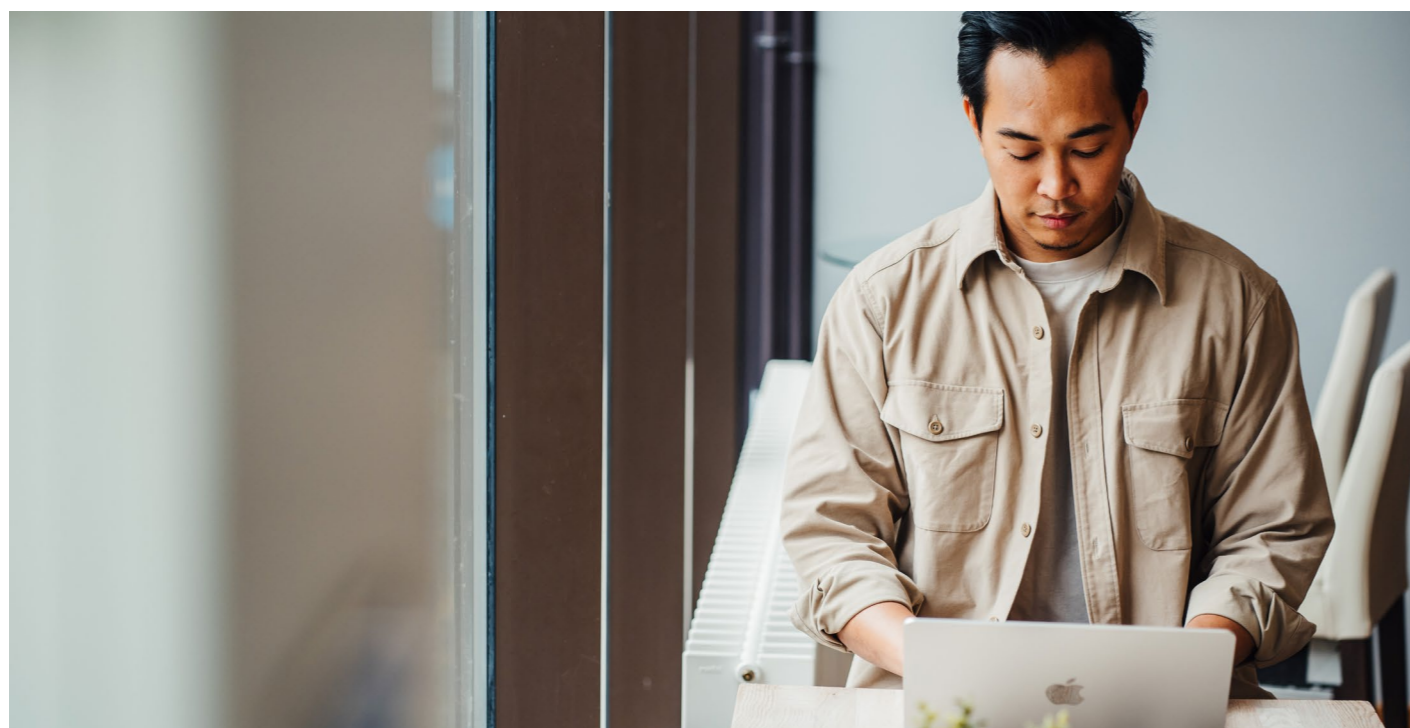
- Definitions of protected characteristics and associated travel risks.
- General safe travel advice.
- Additional guidance for LGBTQIA+ staff.

By providing insight on destinations and knowledge of the potential risks and implications, the guide will enable individuals to make informed decisions on whether to accept international assignments or raise concerns. This guidance is not intended to deter staff from travelling abroad, but simply to research and consider the potential risks associated with such travel and the steps that can be taken to minimise the risks.

Creating Safety, Solidarity, and Empowerment for People Seeking Sanctuary

This year, Warwick successfully renewed our **University of Sanctuary** accreditation, reaffirming our long-standing commitment to supporting refugees and asylum seekers.

The Social Inclusion team have been directing Warwick's University of Sanctuary work, which builds on Warwick's original purpose when it was set up in 1965, to 'increase access to higher education'. We are committed to ensuring that people seeking sanctuary can access, succeed in, and progress from a world-class education at Warwick. To improve access, our Widening Participation and Doctoral College teams provide scholarships, Admissions offer contextual admissions, and Student/PGR Funding teams facilitate reduced fees for asylum seekers. To enable success, we provide a dedicated contact for support and help navigating university life in Widening Participation. To support progression, our careers provision includes Warwick Scholars, a programme offering academic and professional development during and after study.



Professor Michael Scott, Pro-Vice Chancellor (International), said:

“As we mark our 60th anniversary, we celebrate Warwick’s past and future as a globally connected university with a strong social purpose, and being a University of Sanctuary is a vital part of that. Being international is in Warwick’s DNA, and our commitment extends to those displaced by conflict and crisis. We are proud to welcome the perspectives and resilience of sanctuary seekers into our diverse global community, and to offer a safe, inclusive, and empowering environment where all can thrive.”



Looking ahead, our action plan focuses on increasing access and easing transition into university, improving the scholarship process, and deepening collaboration within, and beyond, the higher education sector. The work will be overseen by our Student Diverse Journeys Advisory Group, chaired by Paul Blagburn (Head of Widening Participation and Social Mobility) and Emma Cann (Head of Social Inclusion).

What our students say:

- “Thank you for your amazing scholarship. It helps me much to pursue my dreams. I am grateful for your support and help.” Sanctuary Student
- “Thank you for support and kindness. It helped me to start my life from scratch and save my family”. Sanctuary Student
- “I would like to say [the University] have done a wonderful job for including us all and I have never felt left out of this wonderful community here at Warwick.” Sanctuary Student



Warwick STAR – Highly Commended in the Warwick Institute of Engagement ‘Student Public Engagement Award’

Warwick STAR were recognised in the Warwick Awards for Public and Community Engagement this year. This student-led volunteer group provides English and Maths tutoring at local hotels and youth clubs, offers mentoring to guide applicants through UCAS and scholarship processes, and runs open days on campus in partnership with the Widening Participation team to introduce asylum seekers to university opportunities. Through sustained partnerships and student-led efforts, the project fosters inclusion and long-term accessibility to higher education for refugees. Congratulations and thank you to all involved!



Across The University

Alongside the Social Inclusion team's work, colleagues across Warwick are driving a range of initiatives to strengthen and embed diversity across the University.

Sharing Data Insights to Reduce Pay Gaps and Inform Decision Making

In line with equality legislation, we publish our pay gap and staff diversity data annually, but this is just one step in our ongoing journey – what matters most is how we use this data to inform action, support our departments, and foster a culture of accountability.

The People and Social Inclusion teams are currently rolling out a new management information tool, the People Data App, which will help departments to understand their demographic and pay gap data.

With this information, we can make informed decisions about departmental priorities and formulate strategic people plans. The Strategic People Partners, People Partners, and a Social Inclusion Manager will be working with departments to understand what the data means for them and what action they can take.

Reducing, and ultimately eliminating, gender, ethnicity, disability and LGBTQIA+ pay gaps and increasing staff diversity are core parts of our Social Inclusion and People Strategies. This can take time, particularly in areas where turnover is low or where a diverse pool of candidates is scarce. That's why it's important that every one of us focuses on every opportunity we have to make a difference, be it through recruitment process, promotion decisions, or access to development opportunities. We believe that sharing people data with departments is the first step to enable them to better understand their position and in turn create an environment of awareness and responsibility on workforce profile diversity and pay gaps.



Updating Policy and Practice

Over the past year, the Social Inclusion and People teams have updated several staff policies to better support our diverse community and foster a more inclusive working and learning environment. The Social Inclusion team are also supporting the Dean of Students office to ensure student policies are sensitive to the diverse needs of our student population.

Neonatal Leave and Pay

From April 2025, a new **Neonatal Care Leave and Pay Policy** was introduced, giving eligible parents paid time off when their baby requires neonatal medical care. In line with UK legislation, this leave allows parents, or those in a qualifying relationship with a child, to have dedicated time to spend with their child while they are receiving medical care, without this impacting on their maternity, adoption, paternity or shared parental leave. In reflection of our commitment to family-friendly working, the University will provide full pay, rather than the statutory required amount, for this leave.

Flexible and Hybrid Working

Changes to UK law in 2025 mean employees can now request flexible working from their first day of employment and can make two requests per year. In line with this, the University has updated our **Flexible Working Guidelines**, continuing to support a range of working patterns where possible.

We also continue to embed our **Hybrid Working Policy**, which sets out best practice measures, guidance, and support to enable colleagues to work safely and effectively in a hybrid manner.

Supporting Staff Experiencing Relationship Abuse Guidelines

In November, the University introduced new Supporting Staff Experiencing Relationship Abuse Guidelines (PDF). The guidance provides clear information on the support available both within Warwick and through external organisations, alongside advice for managers and colleagues on how to respond to disclosures. By raising awareness, improving recognition, and enabling affected staff to remain in work, the University aims to provide a safe, supportive environment where individuals feel able to access the help they need.

Trans Inclusion Code of Practice

We launched a new **Trans Inclusion Code of Practice** to support staff and students to live, work, and study in their affirmed gender. The Code outlines our commitment to creating a safe and inclusive environment for our trans, non-binary, gender fluid, and gender non-conforming community.

There are also a range of **LGBTQUIA+ inclusion resources** available to enable everyone to provide a positive and safe working and learning environment free from discrimination, harassment, or victimisation.

Public Holiday Swap pilot

We are continually reviewing policy and process and working with our community to identify how to make Warwick a better place to work and study. Working with our Religion, Faith, and Belief Taskforce, we identified an opportunity to review the allocation of public holiday provision to allow staff to exchange a traditional public holiday, such as Bank Holidays over Easter, for a day off to observe a religious holiday of their choosing. Next year, we will be piloting a scheme to enable staff to swap allocated leave for alternative days of significance.



Transforming Gender Equality

The Athena Swan Charter recognises institutions and departments that demonstrate excellence in embedding gender equality into their culture, structures, and practices.

Warwick holds a Silver institutional Athena Swan award which sets out our priorities and actions on gender equity. The Social Inclusion team has guided a range of institutional initiatives, from enhancing our family-friendly policies (more on this below), to offering places on the Advance HE **Aurora** programme for women academics. This has been further strengthened by the awards achieved at departmental level. In particular, this year, the **School of Engineering has been awarded** a Gold Athena Swan award. Gold status signifies that a department is a beacon of good practice, driving change across the sector.

Key achievements in Engineering so far:

- An annual survey on flexible working needs for staff with caring responsibilities, which informs the teaching timetable – this approach is inclusive, respectful of individual circumstances, and simple yet highly effective, streamlining operations while supporting staff throughout their careers.
- The Women in Engineering Scholarship at Warwick is widely recognised as a flagship initiative for advancing gender diversity in STEM – as well as providing funding, the initiative helps enable talented women to be role models in STEM, amplifying their impact in the sector.
- Increased diversity throughout the student and staff cohorts – including an increase in female representation at Professorial level from 6% when the department first engaged with Athena in 2013, to 20% today.

This marks a significant milestone for Warwick: Engineering becomes only the second department at the University to hold a Gold Award, alongside Warwick Business School. It is also one of just a handful of engineering departments nationally to reach this level.

This achievement reflects over a decade of progress since Warwick first signed up to the Athena Swan Charter in 2009. As we celebrate this success, we remain focused on addressing the remaining challenges to support and transform gender equality within higher education and research.



Supporting and Celebrating Neurodiversity

Over the last few years, a growing proportion of students are sharing that they are neurodivergent, alongside this there is a growing awareness and acceptance of the value that neurodivergent staff and students bring. Unfortunately, there are also still a number of challenges for these groups in work and study.

To create greater representation and support of neurodivergent people here at Warwick, the Social Inclusion team is leading work to strengthen Warwick's support for adjustments (see more on this below) and have initiated a new collaboration with Send it to Alex to trial Appally, an all-in-one platform to enable productivity through accessibility and inclusivity at work by supporting staff to identify their distinctive challenges and get AI powered recommendations for the best support.

Colleagues across the University have also been working together to raise awareness, share lived experiences, and build a more neuro-inclusive culture...

The Umbrella Project

Warwick Medical School (WMS) partnered with the ADHD Foundation to take part in the national **Umbrella Project**, a visual representation of all the different minds we have in the UK that come under the 'umbrella' term of neurodiversity. Displays of colourful umbrellas in WMS buildings join others around the county as a symbol of hope, resilience, and the incredible potential of neurodiverse individuals. The project highlights WMS' commitment to developing understanding of neurodiversity, changing perspectives, and celebrating the many strengths that can come from thinking differently

Embedding Neurodiversity into Medical Education

WMS has also developed new teaching tools to build medical students' understanding of neurodiversity.

Assistant Professor Michele Gutteridge and Dr Kerry Brown, Co Leads of Communication Skills and Lived Experience worked with members of our community to create virtual reality materials for the programme. Using VR headsets, students can take the seat of the patient or parent in a virtual GP surgery environment provide their perspective and develop their understanding of the challenges people in this situation might face.

Dr Tony Lloyd, CEO of the ADHD Foundation, said: "By engaging trainee medics we are shaping the future of healthcare. We are ensuring that those who are neurodiverse are not just acknowledged but also represented, fully understood, and their needs integrated into practice. This is how we create lasting change, for both professionals and patients." And Michelle was featured on ADHD Foundation's **'Neurodiversity Natters' podcast** discussing neurodiversity awareness in medical education.



Neurodiversity Champions

Our volunteer **Neurodiversity Champions** network, led by Alex Jackson (IDG) and Charlie Ward (WMG), are building a more inclusive and supportive environment. They offer confidential advice, signposting, and peer support to neurodivergent staff and allies, helping to make Warwick a more inclusive place for everyone, where diverse thinking styles are recognised and valued as strengths.

Co-created Training for Staff and Students

The WIHEA **Neurodiversity Network**, led by Jagjeet Jutley-Neilson (Psychology), gathers together staff and students with an interest in neurodiversity and aims to enhance understanding and support for neurodivergent individuals within our community at Warwick.

In partnership with the Students' Union and Dean of Students, the Network has co-developed and delivered training sessions that are shaped by the lived experience of neurodivergent students. Training topics include:

- Neurodiversity and Higher Education: Practice and Policy.
- Creating a Neuro-Inclusive Curriculum (Universal Design for Learning) and Classroom Practices.
- Neurodiversity and the Wider Student Experience.

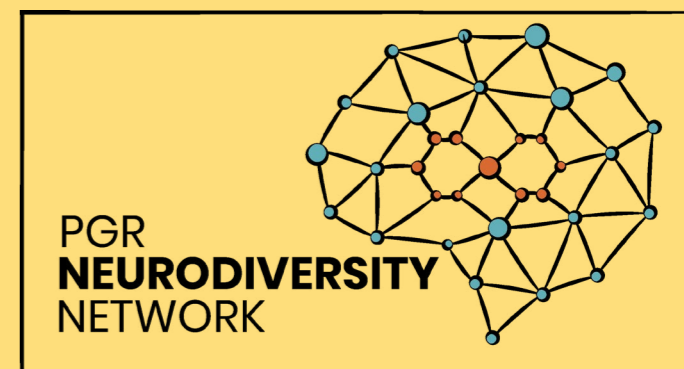
These sessions are helping raise awareness of neurodiversity and improve understanding of how to support neurodivergent people.

Supporting Neurodivergent PGR Students

The **Research Culture** team aim to cultivate a vibrant environment where researchers and research-enablers can thrive.

Two recent research culture projects have focused on the needs and experiences of neurodivergent postgraduate researchers (PGRs):

- Raising Awareness and Meeting the Needs of Neurodivergent PGRs, led by Professor Olympia Palikara (Education Studies), used co-produced research to explore barriers and enablers for neurodivergent PGRs. Key recommendations included enhancing supervisor training, developing more accessible resources, and fostering belonging through more inclusive networking opportunities.
- Neurodiversity in the PGR Community, led by Lauren Wilkinson (Psychology), brought neurodivergent PGRs together to build community and share experiences. Participants reported improved understanding of neurodiversity, greater comfort with their identity, and a desire to expand this work further.



Lauren also established the **PGR Neurodiversity Network**, to create a supportive community for postgraduate researchers who identify as neurodivergent.

Widening Access to Higher Education

We believe that access to a world-leading university should be open to people from all backgrounds. To make the greatest impact possible, the Widening Participation team combines passion, creativity, and innovation to inspire young minds and maximise their potential, through unique opportunities both in school and on campus

The team engages with around 13,000 students annually across primary school, secondary school, and adult education levels. People across the UK have benefited from this work, from our educational partnerships with social mobility charities like IntoUniversity funding two outreach centres offering a programme including after-school study sessions and one to one mentoring, and our own pioneering **Warwick Scholars** programme, a lifecycle approach to supporting applicants from under-represented groups in their academic attainment and progression to Warwick.

In the 2023/24 academic year, 293 undergraduate students were supported by the University of Warwick Scholars programme.

These initiatives have made a demonstrable difference; the diversity of our student community has increased and under-represented student groups' outcomes at Warwick typically outperform benchmarks.

In recognition of this progress, this year Warwick was named University of the Year at the Student Social Mobility Awards. Organised by social mobility charity upReach, the annual awards celebrate institutions and individuals who are driving progress for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds - helping them not only access university, but thrive and succeed beyond it. Warwick received this prestigious national honour for embedding opportunity into every step of the student journey, from outreach and engagement to on-course, graduation, and beyond.

Paul Blagburn, Warwick's Head of Widening Participation and Social Mobility, said:

“We are incredibly proud to be recognised for our work in championing social mobility. This award reflects the commitment of colleagues across Warwick who work every day to ensure that all students - whatever their background - have the support, opportunities and inspiration they need to succeed. We remain deeply committed to this mission and will continue working in partnership with our students, communities, charities and national organisations to build a more inclusive and equitable future.”



left to right - Emily Watkins (Widening Participation Lifecycle Officer), Paul Blagburn (Head of Widening Participation and Social Mobility), and Cheryl Jones (Widening Access and Lifecycle Manager).

Warwick in WonkHE

For more on social mobility, read the WonkHE article [Social mobility needs a whole-university rethink](#), co-written by Warwick's Head of Widening Participation and Social Mobility, Paul Blagburn. The government wants higher education to do more to widen access, in the article Paul and his co-author Gino Graziano say that we need to start by recognising where there is still work to do.

Culture

Through our Social Inclusion Strategy, the Social Inclusion team is leading Warwick's ambition to develop a culture of inclusion where diversity is recognised, understood, and valued. Over the past year, we have been working to see everyone living Warwick's values; this is about ensuring we have the understanding, processes, policies, and guidance in place to support everyone – staff, students, visitors.

Enhancing Adjustments

As part of our role as strategic leaders in creating inclusive policies that remove barriers and enable everyone to thrive, the Social Inclusion team have led and designed an update to our workplace adjustments (also known as reasonable adjustments), designed to better support our diverse staff community and streamline how adjustments are managed across the University.

'Adjustments' refers to the reasonable changes to the working environment or working arrangements and/or provision of additional aids or services to remove or reduce a disadvantage experienced by a staff member.

Previously, adjustments were handled through separate processes for disability, menopause, and carers, and left gaps for other areas where support may be needed. We have created a single, comprehensive approach which covers adjustments related to a wider range of areas including, disability, caring responsibilities, menopause and menstrual health, religion and belief, and gender transition and trans inclusion.

We want to ensure that staff can get the support they need to work at their best. This unified process makes adjustments more accessible, efficient, and supportive, particularly for staff with intersecting or overlapping needs.

To support this new process, we have introduced the following key documents (all of which can be found on our [Adjustments](#) webpage):

- Adjustments Policy – outlining our legal duty to provide reasonable adjustments for disabled staff and our commitment to providing adjustments for a range of other personal circumstances, needs, or identities.
- Adjustments Guide – providing clear steps for staff and managers.
- Adjustments Agreement – for staff and managers to use to record agreed adjustments. Note: This replaces My Adjustment Passport, Carers Passport, and Menopause Passport.
- Additional case study examples and answers to FAQs are also available to help apply the new process effectively.

These improvements simplify the process, promote consistency, and support staff with intersecting or multiple needs to receive appropriate support. In addition, by combining our adjustments processes we hope to foster open conversations about adjustments for all staff.



Training for Continuous Learning and Respectful Discussion on Inclusion

The Social Inclusion team are continuing to build a culture of inclusion where diversity is recognised, understood, and valued. We design, commission, and deliver relevant and engaging training for all staff, supporting continuous learning and creating space for honest conversations around inclusion.



Bite-Sized Learning

Over the last year, we have offered a series of micro-courses on topics such as EDI Fundamentals, Microaggressions, Harassment Prevention, Embracing Neurodiversity, Inclusion in a Hybrid Workplace, and Multigenerational Workforce.

Delivered in partnership with GoodCourse, the programme has been well received with around 60% of staff completing the training. These modules have supported our wider aim to embed inclusive practices across the University, improving our culture and contributing to wellbeing, retention and productivity.

We're sad to say that GoodCourse ceased operations in June 2025, but we're excited to be launching a new training provider very soon!

This year we'll be partnering with Crossroads Global, experts in accessible and engaging EDI learning. Staff will receive short, themed modules directly by email throughout the year, helping to make inclusion learning a regular part of working life. Each module will focus on practical actions we can take to help build a culture that truly thrives on difference.

Modules will come from inclusionlearning@warwick.ac.uk and will be supported with additional learning resources. Watch your email for new courses from October 2025.

This year we ran a survey to hear your feedback on the topics you would like us to focus on. Thank you to everyone who participated in this, your comments have been taken on board and will be considered in the provision for the coming year. Key topics of interest included menopause, cultural awareness, social mobility (class, background and accent), caring, and intersectionality.

Respectful Disagreement

To go beyond understanding bias and to achieve unbiased actions, there must be meaningful interactions with people who are different and unfamiliar to oneself. To facilitate learning and respectful curiosity about difference, this year we developed and piloted a new in-person course on Respectful Disagreement, designed to support staff to have constructive conversations around difficult or sensitive topics.

Through videos, activities and discussion, the course helps participants:

- Navigate challenging topics and disagree in a respectful way.
- Explore if disagreement and conflict have to be negative.
- Create an environment that will encourage respectful, considered and constructive dialogue.
- Explore how personal identity shapes communication.
- Reflect on how our institutional values of Thriving on Difference comes to life in day-to-day dialogue.

This training supports our goal of creating spaces where all voices can be heard and challenging topics can be discussed with confidence and compassion.

Training Bookings Coming Soon

We'll soon be launching a new webpage where staff can book places on Conscious Inclusion, Confident Communications, and Inclusive Leadership sessions.

In the meantime, a range of resources are available on our [Inclusion Learning](#) pages.



Refreshing Warwick's Social Inclusion Governance and Engagement Framework

This year, the Social Inclusion team has been reviewing and refreshing Warwick's governance and engagement framework for social inclusion, working in partnership with Radius Networks, experts in employee networks and resource groups.

Drawing on staff consultation through focus groups, individual stakeholder conversations, and the expertise of the Social Inclusion and Governance teams, we are reshaping how the Social Inclusion Strategy is governed, delivered, and supported.

This work has two interlinked aims:

To establish a governance framework which provides assurance on how the Social Inclusion Strategy is directed, with a clear decision-making process with appropriate authority.

We have established a new Social Inclusion Strategy Committee (SISC), chaired by the Registrar, which met for the first time in March 2025. SISC provides oversight, guidance, and direction on all matters pertaining to social inclusion strategy, policy, procedure, and practice across the University.

To establish an engagement framework for listening to and supporting all our communities, while enabling collaboration so staff across the University can contribute to the social inclusion agenda.

Launching in 2025–26 (with a review after its first year), our new engagement framework will update the structure and operation of Warwick's inclusion taskforces, staff networks, and self-assessment teams. It will also introduce a new collaborative forum bringing together staff across the University to create a social inclusion community of practice. In partnership with Radius Networks and with input from existing groups and key stakeholders, we are developing a range of resources to support this. These will be shared on our website once available.

The new framework will redefine engagement, strengthen accountability, and create better ways of working together for everyone in our community engaged in social inclusion work.



Interview with Rachel Sandby-Thomas, Registrar

Rachel joined the University of Warwick as Registrar in September 2016 and is responsible for the Professional Services Group. She is Chair of The Whitehall and Industry Group, a Trustee of EY Foundation, a Freeman of the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths and the City of London, a Companion at the CMI, a member of the Advisory Board of the Office of Product Safety and Standards, and the Advisory Board of the UPP Foundation, as well as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. She was made a Companion of the Order of the Bath in 2012, named as one of the 2016 FTSE 100 "Women to Watch" and The Times 100 "Most Influential Lawyers", 2012.

Hear more about SISC in our interview with Rachel Sandby Thomas. [Watch the full interview.](#)

Embedding Equality Impact Assessments

Over the past year, the Social Inclusion team has been working closely with colleagues across the University to embed Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) into everyday decision-making and practice.

An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is a way to check that our work (be it a policy, process, service, project, etc.) doesn't disadvantage or discriminate against different groups. EIAs support the design and deliver better and more inclusive work and help us to meet our Public Sector Equality Duty. Considering the equality impacts of what we do and how we do it is crucial for us to drive the structural changes required to create a more diverse and inclusive environment at Warwick.

In partnership with HR, EIAs are being built into the recruitment review (Project Ignite), policy development, and wider project work. We have also collaborated with IDG to integrate EIAs into project management processes for institutional projects. And, we have worked with both the Governance and Academic Governance teams to ensure EIAs are embedded into committee discussions and decision-making, helping to drive more equitable and informed outcomes across the University.

We have also added additional guidance to our [EIAs webpage](#) to support staff to consider how to apply our values and behaviours to EIAs. By embedding these values into EIAs, we ensure that our policies, decisions, and actions not only meet legal requirements but also align with our vision for a better world.



Across The University

In addition to projects led by the Social Inclusion team, staff and students across Warwick are taking action to foster a more inclusive culture in everyday practice.

Leading Through Values

In partnership with Leadership and Management Development, the Social Inclusion team has supported the design and delivery of Warwick's new Values Based Leadership programme. The training focuses on embedding our values into everyday behaviours, decisions, and ways of working, ensuring they guide how leaders inspire, support, and empower their teams.

Values-based leaders bring people together around shared principles, fostering cohesive, purpose-driven teams. They use values as a lens for decision-making, communication, recruitment, strategic planning, and change management, creating a positive culture where everyone understands their role in achieving the University's vision. By reflecting on and applying our values in practice, leaders help teams thrive, work inclusively, and deliver our purpose collectively.



Engaging with the Public and Community

Warwick wants to be recognised regionally, nationally and internationally as a place that is leading on learning, developing and achieving inclusion. Through public and community engagement, we continue to deepen relationships with our surrounding communities, contributing skills, knowledge, volunteering, and support to facilitate sustainable change, build community capacity, and promote inclusive economies.

Warwick Awards for Public and Community Engagement

The Warwick Awards for Public and Community Engagement celebrate staff and students across the University who exemplify this commitment in practice – below are a selection of award winners who are leading inclusion-related engagement work:

Joe Cregeen, Martha Turvey, and Luke Smith (Physics)

Joe, Martha and Luke have developed and delivered a range of inclusive outreach activities focused on Widening Participation, particularly for students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). By adapting equipment and using tactile and audio tools, their work ensures inclusive access to hands-on science learning, enabling meaningful engagement for all learners.

Dr Andrew Cooper (Philosophy)

Andrew brings philosophy into public life through radio, community events, and podcasting. Highlights include a BBC Radio 3 essay on overlooked feminist philosopher Amalia Holst, and two community events for the 2024 Being Human Festival in partnership with the Islington Food Partnership used philosophical insights to support local food justice initiatives and foster community dialogue.

Eleanor Harrison (WMS)

Eleanor is a third-year PhD student delivering innovative outreach on menstrual health and endometriosis. Her creative outreach includes a podcast mini-series, tactile models, and a popular playdough uterus activity designed to break taboos and make complex health topics accessible. Through these efforts, she aims to destigmatise menstrual health and raise awareness of under-researched conditions like endometriosis.

Dr Jackie Shanley, Maddison Wordon, Nico Ruga, and Aidan Baker-Johal (WMS)

Jackie, Maddison, Nico and Aidan from Warwick Medical School developed a module combining student volunteering with classroom learning to address health inequalities. Partnering with organisations like Coventry Central Hall and Leamington Homeless Shelter, students support underserved communities while gaining first-hand insight into social determinants of health. The initiative has benefited over 100 service users and deepened ties between Warwick and the region.

The Warwick Orbyts Team (Physics)

Yoshi Eschen, Marina Lafarga Magro, Anwasha Sahu, Ben Davies, Isobel Lockley, and Pratihtha Rawat are part of The Warwick Orbyts; a group of researchers who partner with five local schools to deliver a 14-week physics and astronomy research programme for Year 10 students, particularly girls and those from low socio-economic background. The initiative fosters confidence, curiosity, and academic skills. By connecting researchers with schools lacking specialist science teachers, Orbyts aims to address systemic inequalities in STEM education and inspire the next generation of scientists.

School Mental Health Champions project

A youth focused initiative developed by ThinkHigher to empower local pupils with the knowledge, confidence, and skills to support mental health and well-being among their peers. The programme was designed by an accredited UKCP psychotherapist with the aim of boosting participants' confidence, sense of belonging, and awareness of mental health strategies. In 2024/25, our Community Engagement team successfully worked with Year 10 and Year 12 pupils in two local schools (Westwood Academy and West Coventry) to deliver the programme in collaboration with Jo Gaffney from the University's Wellbeing Services and two Psychology placement students. The team plan to work with six local schools in 2025/2026.

The **Warwick Institute of Engagement** are enabling a wide range of public engagement through curiosity, creativity, and collaboration.



Inclusive Education and Experience.

Making Students' Voices Heard

The National Student Survey (NSS) is the UK's largest and most established survey of higher education students. It gives us valuable insights into the views of our final-year undergraduates, helping us to improve the quality of teaching, learning, and the wider student experience.

This year, Warwick's overall positivity score rose again, placing us 15th in the UK, with 85% of students saying they would recommend Warwick to future students.

Several results were particularly encouraging, reflecting progress in areas that align closely with our Social Inclusion ambitions and priorities:

- We are developing a culture that supports students and staff in achieving their potential – **88% of students say our courses challenge them to achieve their best work** (up from 2024 and above the sector average).
- We are removing barriers and biases to provide an experience of outstanding academic and professional growth – **84% of students say the marking and assessment on their course is fair** (up from 2024).
- We are enabling constructive dialogue, respectful curiosity, and an environment with the ability to voice ideas at its core – **89% of students say they feel free to express their ideas, opinions, and beliefs** (up from 2024 and above the sector average).

The University takes the results of the National Student Survey (NSS) very seriously. This valuable student feedback helps to shape and improve teaching, learning and student support at Warwick for future generations.

Building Belonging

This year, Inca Hide-Wright (LMD), Dr Tom Ritchie (Chemistry), Adam Alcock (Education), and Leigh Mencarini (History), launched the **Building Belonging Framework**.

Feeling a sense of belonging is personal. Belonging is supported by creating a welcoming environment where everyone feels valued and included, built on a foundation of trust. When students and staff feel they belong, they thrive. To help all staff and students feel they belong at Warwick, we want them to trust:

- Their voice is valued, and they have a place at Warwick (Inclusion).
- Their contributions are recognised and celebrated at Warwick (Mattering).
- They can build meaningful relationships with others at Warwick (Connection).
- They have the freedom to make their own choices and shape their own path (Empowerment)

Developed with Warwick students and staff, supported by WIHEA (Warwick International Higher Education Academy), AdvanceHE, and WONKHE/Pearson, the Warwick Building Belonging Framework draws on these four elements – inclusion, mattering, empowerment, and connection – acknowledging that each are connected by an enabling factor, trust. Trust is when the audience feels they can rely on others, they feel safe to be themselves, ask questions, and take on new opportunities.

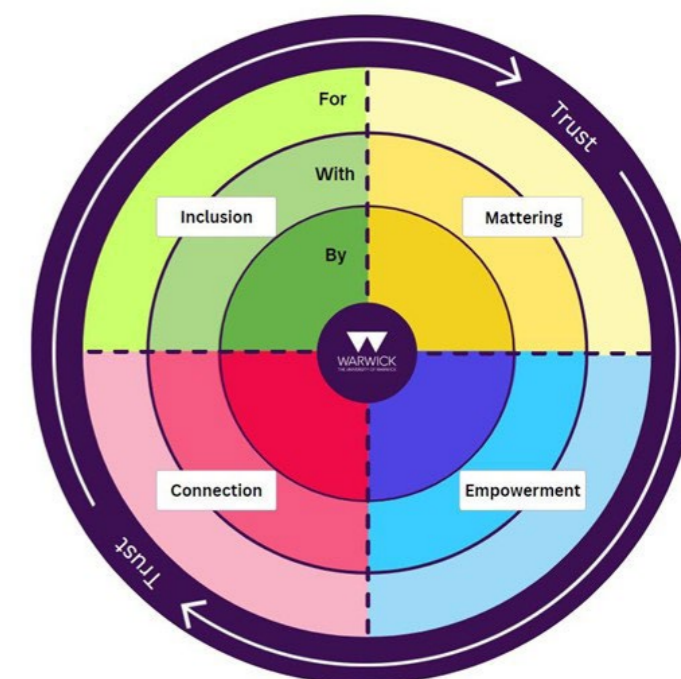
Student success outcomes are impacted by their sense of belonging. The framework is designed to equip staff with the knowledge and tools to enhance students' sense of belonging and thus improve outcomes.

The Building Belonging Living Guide brings together practical actions and outcomes, self-assessment

questions and examples of best practice within and beyond Warwick and is supported by additional resources:

- A ready-to-use presentation for staff to introduce the Building Belonging Framework to colleagues, teams, and wider networks,
- A snapshot tool designed to support staff to discuss and capture opportunities through the lens of the framework.
- A custom BelongingGPT AI tool to offer contextual support and actionable next steps, making it easier to move from planning to action.

Pilot projects are evaluating the framework's applicability across diverse aspects of the student experience, from academic support to extracurricular activities, resources are being actively developed and updated, and the Belonging Learning Circle are sharing experiences and developing best practices.





Communicating with Students Compassionately

The Student Experience team have been working on a **Compassionate Communications Change Project** reviewing student facing communications being delivered to students in times of difficulty, to understand the impact of these communications and where, and how, they can become more transparent and demonstrate more compassion for students.

The way we communicate with students matters. Students have told us that the way we communicate with them can make a big difference to their wellbeing and ability to keep focusing on their studies and university life. Research also highlights that when messages are written with care and compassion, students express a reduction in negative feelings, are more likely to reach out for help and are more likely to experience higher rates of student satisfaction.

The Compassionate Communication project is working across academic and professional services teams to ensure messages are clear, respectful, and written with the student in mind. So far, the project has:

- Produced guidance on writing compassionate communications.
- Working with departments and teams across the institution, reviewed communications and updated template letters on topics such as academic conduct panels and missing students.
- Established for a growing network of Changemakers across the University who are completing this work locally and sharing best practice. This includes training to build confidence in using the guidance effectively.

Staff are already reporting clearer student responses and fewer follow-up questions, while students have told us that updated communications are easier to understand, offer more reassurance, and make their next steps much clearer.

This programme builds on national work led by the Higher Education Mental Health Implementation Taskforce, and reflects Warwick's commitment to a more compassionate, student-centred culture.

Ensuring All Students Benefit from a Diverse and Inclusive Education

Inclusive Education is central to our mission to reduce inequalities in higher education and ensure that all students can thrive throughout their academic journey. This whole provider approach, is a core part of the Student Education and Experience Strategy and fundamental to the delivery of our new Access and Participation Plan. Based on extensive consultation with students and staff it ensures action and momentum across all dimensions of students experience at Warwick. This work is grounded in evidence, informed by research and data, and enriched through collaboration with other institutions.

This work continues to focus on four key areas:

- Inclusive curriculum and communities.
- Inclusive teaching and learning spaces.
- Inclusive support and co-curricular spaces.
- Inclusive assessment and awarding processes.

The progress made across all these areas is a testament to the collaborative efforts of staff and students across the University. Key developments this year include inclusive assessment workshops, new academic skills resources, a network of Student Disability Champions, and inclusive careers guidance.

Looking ahead, the Inclusive Education team are working with departments to embed a Theory of Change evaluation framework, supported through workshops for colleagues, and a revised Inclusive Education Action Plans, helping departments align their activities with measurable outcomes. Through evidencing impact, refining long-standing interventions and exploring new opportunities for change, focus remains on creating an inclusive, supportive, and empowering environment for all our students.

Read more about **Inclusive Education at Warwick: Progress and Priorities.**

Department Innovation: Spotlight on activity

Academic departments have continued to make significant strides in their inclusive practice. Transitions, academic support, inclusive assessment and community building have been dominant themes across each faculty for 24/25.

For example, this year, the Department of Mathematics hosted the inaugural 'Diversifying and Decolonising Mathematics' Conference, informed by a co-created research project with students. This work and community of colleagues continue to grow internally and across the sector, with plans to develop new modules and course content in the coming years.

In the Faculty of Arts, Classics and Ancient History have focused on peer mentoring and academic enrichment sessions to help improve academic performance, enhance wellbeing and build community between year groups. This includes language sessions on Ancient Greek, supported by the Classics Society and PGR students.

In Social Sciences, Applied Linguistics have expanded their UniVoice programme, aimed at enhancing academic writing skills and assessment literacy to help students develop their individual style. The programme has worked closely with students to understand key skills required across all their modules to identify gaps and ensure alignment with learning outcomes. A new addition this year has been workshops to support students with using AI tools.

Awarding Innovation, Belonging, and Recognition in Support of Inclusion

As we celebrate Warwick's 60th year, the Social Inclusion team presented Social Inclusion Staff Awards at our annual Inclusion Conference to recognise staff who embody our commitment to creating a fairer, more inclusive university.

Professor Beccy Freeman, Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education), announced our shortlist at the opening of the conference and throughout the day attendees had the chance to vote for a winner in each of the following areas: Innovation Through Diversity, Belonging Through Culture, and Recognition Through Leadership. At the close of the conference, Beccy and Kulbir Shergill, Director of Social Inclusion, announced our winners:

Innovation Through Diversity: We Are Chemistry / Dr Tom Ritchie, Adam Alcock, and Dr Reece Goodall

This award recognises individuals and teams who have demonstrated how diverse backgrounds, identities, or perspectives, have led to innovation and positive change.

We Are Chemistry is an award-winning initiative that transforms the student experience through authentic partnership, inclusivity, and innovation grounded in lived experience. By recruiting students based on their perspectives rather than CVs, We Are Chemistry empowers underrepresented voices to co-create impactful resources, cultural activities, and systemic change within the Chemistry department and beyond. Its student-led projects have addressed mental health, representation, lab safety, curriculum reform, and inclusive recruitment, while fostering collaboration across departments and influencing national EDI policy. We are Chemistry exemplifies how valuing student diversity leads to measurable outcomes and a more inclusive, innovative university culture.



This year We are Chemistry also won the Royal Society of Chemistry Inclusion and Diversity Prize.

The Royal Society of Chemistry's Prizes reward those undertaking excellent work in the chemical sciences from across the world. The We are Chemistry was named winner of the Royal Society of Chemistry's Inclusion and Diversity Prize, which honours those working to enhance accessibility, inclusivity, and diversity in the chemical sciences.

**Belonging Through Culture:
APPPGR / Oliver Turner, Sara Hattersley,
Tina Finlay, Judith Taylor**

This award recognises individuals and teams who have built inclusive environments where people feel seen, respected, and can achieve their potential.

The Academic and Professional Pathway for Postgraduate Researchers who Teach programme (APPPGR) provides a uniquely inclusive, reflective, and empowering learning space for 50-60 postgraduate researchers each year, supporting their dual identities as students and educators. With a strong focus on social justice, belonging, and student voice, the course enables participants to explore systemic inequalities, draw on real university data, and connect across disciplines. From intentional group work and inclusive teaching practices to personalised support and active alumni involvement, APPPGR fosters a vibrant, responsive community where early career teachers are equipped with the confidence and tools to shape a more inclusive academic culture at Warwick and beyond.



**Recognition Through Leadership:
Dr Anil Awesti**

This award recognises individuals and teams who have shown visible leadership that has driven meaningful change on inclusion at the University and beyond.

For the past seven years, Dr Anil Awesti has been a driving force behind Warwick's anti-racism work. Through initiatives like the Tackling Racial Inequality at Warwick (TRIW) programme, the WIHEA Anti-Racist Pedagogy Learning Circle, and the Anti-Racist Pedagogy Conference, Anil has led transformative change in staff development, teaching practice, and institutional policy. His leadership has been central to embedding anti-racism into Warwick's Inclusive Education Model, Race Equality Charter, and wider sector engagement, with over 700 staff trained and measurable progress in understanding, confidence, and action taken. Anil's impact has been recognised both internally and externally, enhancing Warwick's profile as a national leader in inclusive education.

To recognise the work of our senior leadership colleagues (members of Warwick Leaders Forum), we also presented an inclusive leadership award:

**Inclusive Leadership:
Professor Rebecca Freeman**

This award is for senior leaders who champion inclusion at a strategic level.

Beccy leads the Inclusive Education Model, our institution-wide initiative designed to ensure that all students benefit from a diverse, inclusive, and student-centred education through co-creation with students, embedding diversity in the curriculum, supporting inclusive behaviours among staff and students, and reducing disparities in academic outcomes.

Additionally, Becky demonstrates authentic, values-driven leadership and is a role model for female academics and professional services staff.



We also invited back a former colleague to celebrate many years of transformational support for inclusion:

**Lifetime Achievement:
Christine Ennew OBE**

As Provost at Warwick from 2016 to 2023, Chris Ennew was Executive Sponsor for sexual orientation – she was a visible role model for LGBTQIA+ staff at the University, proudly wearing the rainbow lanyard since the allies scheme was initiated, being a member of the LGBTQIA+ Taskforce, and featuring in the LGBTQIA+ 'In Conversation With...' series.

Chris also supported our application to the Disability Smart audit, working to ensure that accessibility and disability inclusion were firmly on the agenda for the University and visible for all. She was the Senior Disability Champion for Leadership and Learning and Development. Her support in the development of the updated adjustments process was invaluable, securing a quintupled central budget! In addition, Chris Chaired the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee for a number of years, creating a clear governance link for inclusion issues directly into Council and Senate.

Supporting Young Peoples Futures

Since 2021, the Social Inclusion team have proudly partnered with the EY Foundation to deliver a series of transformative employability programmes for young people aged 16–19 from low-income backgrounds and/or who are care experienced.

These programmes provide a launchpad for young people to develop invaluable skills, gain hands-on experience and take the first steps towards their future careers.

Through three tailored programmes each academic year – Smart Futures, Beyond Your Limits, and Your Futures – participants gain real-world work experience within Warwick departments, alongside structured personal and professional development. All the young people achieve a Level 2 qualification from the Chartered Management Institute in Team Leading and are assigned a mentor from Warwick who will work with them to raise aspirations.

“Over the span of two weeks, I developed skills in communication, networking, leadership, and building a professional image. Every session was incredibly useful and my work experience at WMG was absolutely fantastic opening doors that I had never known existed. I am leaving this programme feeling much more confident, motivated, and prepared for the professional and academic world.”

Oscar Szturc, 2025 programme participant.

We've supported 98 young people through the programmes since the partnership began. In the most recent Smart Futures 2025 cohort:

- 100% of participants were eligible for free school meals.
- 90% were from ethnic minority backgrounds.
- 70% had no previous work experience

Participants left the programme with increased confidence, a better understanding of their strengths, and a stronger sense of what's possible for their futures. University teams also gained valuable insight into the needs and expectations of the next generation, helping inform more inclusive recruitment practices going forward.



Leadership

Through our Social Inclusion Strategy, the Social Inclusion team is leading Warwick's ambition to be recognised as a leader in social inclusion. Over the past year, we have been working to be a force for change on social inclusion regionally, nationally, and internationally.

Leading on Learning, Developing and Achieving Inclusion

Warwick's Director of Social Inclusion, Kulbir Shergill, has been recognised among the **Inspirational D&I Leaders 2025** by d&i Leaders. This list is compiled from nominations by over 370 international diversity and inclusion professionals to celebrate some of the most inspiring individuals accelerating workplace inclusion around the globe.

In addition Warwick have taken on a new sector-wide leadership role as Co-Chair of the **Network of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Academic Leads (NEDIAL)**. This network connects equality, diversity, and inclusion leaders across UK higher education to share best practice, lessons learned, and innovative approaches to creating inclusive environments.

Earlier this year, Warwick's strategic approach to inclusion was featured in **an interview by the Guild**, highlighting our work in partnership with colleagues across Warwick and external organisations to increase diversity within our community and strengthen our inclusive culture.



Thriving on Difference

In today's evolving workplace, diverse perspectives are key to driving innovation, fostering resilience, and building stronger, more inclusive cultures. **Thrive on Difference** is a free online event series from the Social Inclusion team, chaired by Kulbir Shergill, our Director of Social Inclusion, designed to bring leaders together to explore how embracing diversity can transform organisations.

In these events, we engage with speakers and panellists who share their expertise and success stories on how to build workplaces that truly thrive on difference.

This year's events included:

The Future of EDI Training

While diversity training is increasingly common for organisations wanting an inclusive culture the research is divided on whether it delivers real change. Some studies indicate positive outcomes such as increased awareness of bias and improved attitudes toward diversity by increasing empathy and reducing discriminatory behaviour. However, many studies argue that diversity training frequently fails to produce long-lasting behavioural change. Some programmes can result in resentment among employees, especially if it is mandated, and reinforce stereotypes. It is also argued that those most impacted by training are those who are already bought into the concept.

Our panel for this event was Chris Mansfield (Client Services Director, GoodCourse), Dr Dawn Eubanks (Associate Professor of Behavioural Science and Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Warwick Business School), and Dr Shweta Singh (Assistant Professor of Information Systems and Management, Warwick Business School).

The discussion examined the effectiveness of current EDI training practices, the challenges in engaging diverse audiences, and innovative alternatives that could reshape the field. Dawn and Shweta shared their exciting research using technology to help people recognise their biases through games and avatars. Making learning a more personal and interactive experience. Chris shared how his organisation's micro-courses help to deliver continued learning, reinforcing long term change.

Top tips for better training:

- Tailored programmes: Design training relevant to the organisation and the role of participants.
- Focus on behaviour change: Stress the importance of practical strategies for reducing bias.
- Ongoing Education: Training needs to be part of a bigger strategy.
- Leadership involvement: Visible leadership sets the tone.
- Measure outcomes: Assess effectiveness of training



Unlocking the Power of Positive Action

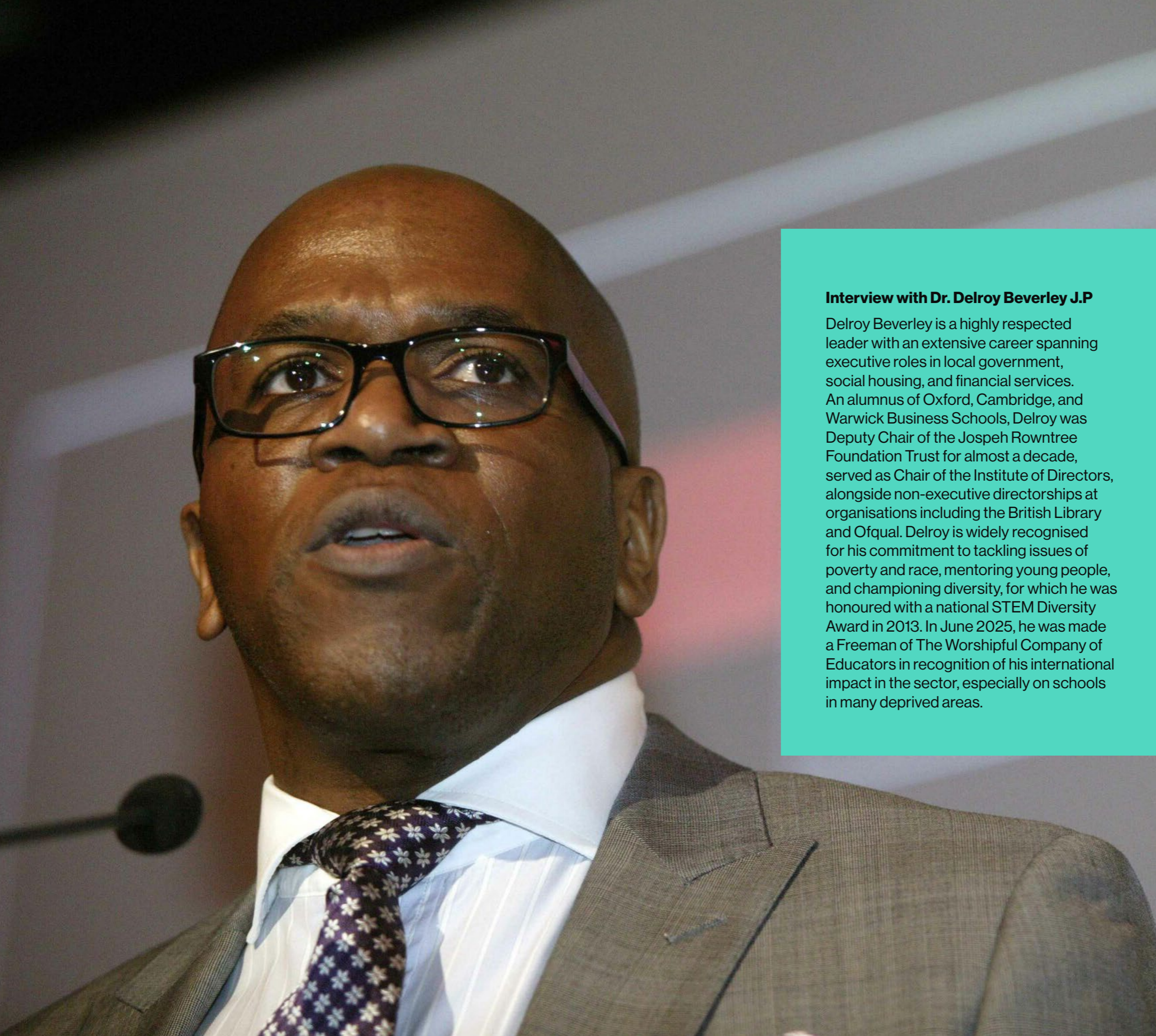
Despite being a legally permitted tool under the Equality Act 2010, positive action remains underutilised by employers due to fear, uncertainty, and confusion about its application. But, when implemented correctly, positive action can create meaningful change – removing barriers to progression for disadvantaged or marginalised groups, broadening talent pools, and helping employers better understand and meet the needs of a diverse workforce.

Our panel for this event was Amrit Samra (Senior Legal Counsel, University of Warwick), Vicky Strudwick (Head Of Research Culture Partnerships, University of Warwick), and Azzedine Dabo (Principal Investigator, GSK).

The discussion dispelled common misconceptions and provided practical insights into how organisations can confidently and effectively use positive action to drive change. Amrit provided clarity on the distinction between positive action and positive discrimination under the Equality Act. Vicky introduced the Warwick PATHWAY programme, launched to address the underrepresentation of Black researchers in higher education. Azzedine shared his experiences at GSK, where he leads programs aimed at supporting ethnic minority students pursuing STEM careers.

Key takeaways:

- Positive action aims to level the playing field for individuals with protected characteristics, by implementing measures to address specific needs, reduce disadvantages, or increase participation.
- Representation, sharing personal stories, and role modelling can also help to inspire people to believe in their potential and encourage engagement in positive action initiatives.
- It is essential to gain buy in from senior leaders.
- Clear communication of goals and impact is crucial to overcoming resistance and engage people in these initiatives.
- Organisations should maintain a thorough trail of evidence to support decisions on positive action and continuously review the needs for these initiatives in order to mitigate legal risk.



Interview with Dr. Delroy Beverley J.P

Delroy Beverley is a highly respected leader with an extensive career spanning executive roles in local government, social housing, and financial services. An alumnus of Oxford, Cambridge, and Warwick Business Schools, Delroy was Deputy Chair of the Josphe Rowntree Foundation Trust for almost a decade, served as Chair of the Institute of Directors, alongside non-executive directorships at organisations including the British Library and Ofqual. Delroy is widely recognised for his commitment to tackling issues of poverty and race, mentoring young people, and championing diversity, for which he was honoured with a national STEM Diversity Award in 2013. In June 2025, he was made a Freeman of The Worshipful Company of Educators in recognition of his international impact in the sector, especially on schools in many deprived areas.

In this interview, Delroy talks to Kulbir Shergill about positive action, including his own early experience on a pioneering executive leadership positive action programme. [Watch the full interview.](#)

What attendees say about Thrive on Difference events:

- "It opens your eyes to the possibilities that are achievable if you look at the bigger picture, beyond your immediate situation."
- "Very informative and relevant, I always learn something I'd not heard before."
- "The topics are fascinating, and be prepared to take notes and ask questions."
- "It's a good way to hear what the latest is, and get updates from people in the field."
- "Dynamic and extremely relevant to anyone working on EDI work."
- "Encourages you to be more proactive and be part of the solution."

We invite you to **participate in our future events** and catch up on previous events so that together we can shape a future where differences are our greatest strength.

Challenging Young People to Think Like a Scientist

In 2021, the **National Scientific Thinking Challenge** was launched under the direction of Nick Barker from Warwick's Social Inclusion team, in collaboration with six UK universities and the national university admissions service (UCAS). Designed for Year 10 pupils, the Challenge is a free online science competition that can be accessed from any internet-enabled device. It poses engaging scientific problems requiring no prior study, only reasoning and curiosity. This format removes barriers to participation and empowers students from all backgrounds to discover their potential.

Since its inception, the Challenge has grown rapidly, with ~23,000 students from ~300 schools taking part in 2025. Participating schools span elite private institutions, non-selective comprehensives, and overseas institutions. The Challenge is open to all emphasising inclusion and equality (e.g., this year programme organisers helped a teacher to adapt the questions for a visually impaired child, underscoring the commitment to accessibility for every student).

By removing links with the curriculum, welcoming all schools, and ensuring full accessibility, the Challenge demonstrates that talent exists everywhere. It creates space for a diversity of students to excel and builds their confidence by showing that they are just as capable as anyone else.

Thank you to volunteers from Warwick, Southampton, Bristol, Newcastle, Manchester and Oxford Universities – your time and efforts make this unique and impactful challenge possible.



Nick Barker, Schools Outreach Fellow in Residence.

“To me, inclusion is an action that requires effort. To include! The children I work with don't always have things very easy. To help them to believe in themselves they have to know that we believe in them and building that level of trust takes time.”



Inspiring, Reflecting, and Sharing at our Inclusion Conference

The University of Warwick's 2025 **Inclusion Conference** was a vibrant and thought-provoking event that brought together staff and external partners to reflect on and celebrate the University's progress in fostering an inclusive environment.

Delivered in partnership between the Social Inclusion and Inclusive Education teams, this year's event focused on the importance of values in the workplace.

The conference featured:

- Professor Binna Kandola OBE, renowned business psychologist and author, delivered a powerful keynote on unconscious bias and organisational change. His insights drew from decades of research and practice, including his work with Pearn Kandola and his publications such as *Racism at Work* and *The Value of Difference*.
- Shaparak “Shappi” Khorsandi, celebrated comedian and author, offered a deeply personal and humorous perspective on neurodiversity and identity, referencing her latest book *Scatter Brain* and her experiences as an Iranian immigrant in the UK with ADHD.
- Six breakout sessions on topics such as compassionate communication, inclusive co-creation, reflexivity, positive action and how neuroscience can help support neurodiverse staff.
- Interactive panels and poetry, offering creative and reflective engagement.
- Social Inclusion Staff Awards, where attendees voted live for winners in categories celebrating innovation, leadership, and belonging.

The event provided a valuable platform for collaboration, learning, and recognition, reinforcing Warwick's commitment to equity and inclusion across all areas of university life.

Catch up on photos, slides and resources from the day on our Inclusion Conference webpages.

Now in its 4th year we'd like to extend particular thanks to Megan Caulfield, Senior Project Officer (Student Success) for her exceptional leadership of the conference development.





Feedback

100% of attendees would recommend the conference to a colleague.

93% of attendees said they were satisfied with the quality of the sessions offered.

83% of attendees said the conference provided an opportunity to share practice and generate ideas.

93% of attendees said the conference provided an inclusive environment to learn and collaborate.

93% of attendees agreed that they found the conference inspiring.

What people said:

- “Shappi was fantastic. That was like a breath of fresh air and such a nice addition to the day. I think everyone really enjoyed that.”
- “Binna was amazing and I really enjoyed his talk - it was insightful and informative.”
- “I thought there was a really positive energy to the conference and I thought all the sessions that I attending with highly relevant and thought provoking.”
- “The organisation of the conference was exceptional, so much went on behind the scenes to make it a really fantastic day and ensure the focus was on engaging and learning rather than the logistics.”
- “I loved the balance of the speakers and having the breakout workshops. Having chance to socialise I met a lot of really inspiring colleagues who I would not have met in my day to day job.”
- “Thank you for another fab and special day. The SI Conference is the highlight of my work year and gives me a much needed boost and an opportunity to catch-up with colleagues across the University”



Advancing Inclusion Across Europe

This year, the Social Inclusion team were proud to host **The Guild's Gender and Diversity Working Group** at our **Venice Centre**, bringing together representatives from leading research-intensive universities across Europe.

Founded in 2016, The Guild of European Research-Intensive Universities comprises 23 distinguished institutions across 17 countries. The Gender and Diversity Working Group plays a vital role in this network, working collectively to benchmark progress, share best practice, and shape policy positions on gender equality, diversity, and inclusion in higher education and research.



The gathering in Venice provided an inspiring space for learning and collaboration. Warwick colleagues shared insights into key areas of our institutional inclusion work:

- Kulbir Shergill (Director of Social Inclusion) and Emma Cann (Head of Social Inclusion) presented Warwick's approach to advancing equality and inclusion.
- Rachel Sandby-Thomas (Registrar) spoke about how Warwick is providing support for those affected by sexual harassment and relationship abuse.
- Marie Sams (IAS) and Professor Jo Angouri (Applied Linguistics) shared their expertise on embedding diversity in research culture and addressing gendered practices in academic and professional settings.

We were also pleased to welcome Hana Tenglerová, Policy Officer (Gender Sector) at EU Science, Research and Innovation, who presented the European Research Area's latest efforts on gender equality, including the newly published zero-tolerance code of conduct on gender-based violence in the EU research and innovation system.

The meeting underscored the value of international collaboration in tackling systemic inequalities and building inclusive research cultures. We were honoured to host such an important exchange at Warwick's beautiful Venice Centre, a unique setting that offered both inspiration and opportunity for deep reflection.

Across The University

Beyond the Social Inclusion team's priorities, many individuals and departments are showing leadership in advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion across Warwick.

Breaking New Ground on Inclusion

This year our academics have led a range of ground-breaking inclusion-related research projects:

Dr Jo Muter (Warwick Medical School) has developed a **test to identify women with a womb lining that increases the risk of miscarriage.**

The test, piloted at Tommy's National Centre for Miscarriage Research, helps detect a faulty cellular reaction in the womb. This breakthrough could lead to targeted treatments and offer hope to those experiencing recurrent pregnancy loss.



Professor Redzo Mujcic (Warwick Business School) explored **hidden racial bias in everyday transactions** through a field experiment on Brisbane buses. Findings showed white passengers were twice as likely as Black passengers to receive free rides when short on fare. The study highlights how discretionary favours can perpetuate white privilege and calls for greater awareness and auditing to reduce everyday discrimination.



Professor Michele Aaron (Film and TV Studies)

uses film and cinema as an ethical medium for sharing under- and mis-represented voices. One example of this is a new project **inviting LGBTQIA+ people with a terminal diagnosis to share their stories on camera.** It is hoped that capturing real-life experiences and stories on film will challenge assumptions and, by deepening understanding of the diverse needs and realities faced by LGBTQIA+ people at the end of life, serve as a powerful tool for education, empathy, and change in the training of clinicians and care providers.

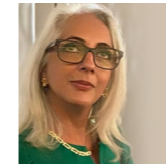


Dr Elena Riva (IATL) advocates for a lifelong, integrated approach to **wellbeing across education**, linking schools and universities as continuous stages. Her research highlights the need for whole-institution strategies that embed wellbeing into culture, leadership, and curriculum. By aligning policies and practices across sectors, higher education can better support both students and staff, fostering resilient, inclusive, and compassionate learning environments.



People.

Meet the Social Inclusion team:



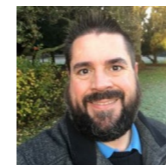
Kulbir Shergill, Director of Social Inclusion

"Inclusion within a university is not merely a principle – it is a commitment to cultivating a culture where talent is nurtured, knowledge is both created and shared, and every individual feels welcomed and valued. Achieving this requires a deep understanding of our mutual responsibilities as human beings. For me, inclusion means recognising and respecting the impact our actions and work have on others, and ensuring that those we serve – students, staff, and the wider community – are at the heart of everything we do."



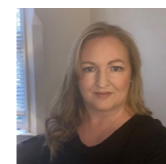
Emma Cann, Head of Social Inclusion

"Fostering inclusion remains a vital priority. For me, this means cultivating a culture rooted in respect and understanding, where each individual feels valued. It also involves encouraging personal responsibility in shaping an environment where everyone has the opportunity to thrive."



Andy Johnson, Social Inclusion Manager

"I believe that an individual's background should have no profound impact on their ability to access, be part of, and succeed within university and have spent my career working to address this."



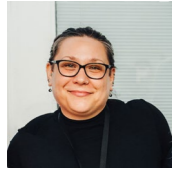
Claire Algar, Social Inclusion Manager

"For me, inclusion simply means ensuring that no one's background limits their chance to belong, feel valued for their contribution, or achieve success in their career. Much of my work in this space focuses on social mobility – breaking down barriers and opening up opportunities so that everyone has the chance to thrive and fulfil their potential."



Kat Grover, Social Inclusion Manager

"I joined the Social Inclusion Team in March, and am thrilled to continue my career in higher education inclusion at a university like Warwick and within such a supportive and forward-thinking team. From the outset, it was clear how deeply valued equality, diversity and inclusion work is throughout the university. It's a privilege to collaborate with colleagues across the institution, all working together to ensure that the University is a place where everyone has an equitable opportunity to succeed."



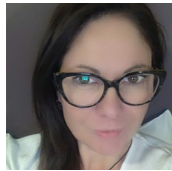
Michaela Hodges, Social Inclusion Manager

"I am driven by a belief that we can always find better ways of doing things to create a more equitable world. I believe in fairness, humility, and always learning. I love reading (for work and for fun), so let me know if you want any equality-related book recommendations!"



Nick Barker, Schools Outreach Fellow in Residence

"To me, inclusion is an action that requires effort. To include! The children I work with don't always have things very easy. To help them to believe in themselves they have to know that we believe in them and building that level of trust takes time."



Lorraine Martin, Team Administrator and PA to Director

"Inclusion matters to me because I've never understood why anyone wouldn't accept others for who they are. Working within the Social Inclusion Team has opened my eyes to the many forms of discrimination people face every day. As someone who has experienced barriers in my own life, being part of this team gives real purpose to my career. It's empowering to contribute to work that uplifts others and helps create a space where everyone feels seen, valued, and respected."

