Science and Technology Facilities Council

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan 2026–27

Research and innovation
by everyone, for everyone

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Introduction

This is the 2026 to 2027 iteration of STFC's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan. It sets out a focused programme of work to embed inclusion into how STFC operates, supports its people and delivers its mission as a leading multi-disciplinary research and innovation organisation.

STFC is part of UK Research and Innovation, the UK's largest public funder of research and innovation. This plan is aligned to the UKRI EDI Strategy and associated shared actions, ensuring coherence with wider organisational priorities while reflecting the specific context and needs of STFC.

Our approach is grounded in the principle that equality, diversity and inclusion are essential to attracting, developing and retaining a diverse range of talent, and to creating an environment where all colleagues can contribute fully. We are committed to listening to our people, valuing different perspectives and embedding respectful and inclusive behaviours across the organisation.

The action plan operates as a rolling 12-month framework, designed to evolve in response to data, insight and organisational need, with regular review and updates.

This action plan is being delivered during a period of significant change across UKRI and STFC. As transformation activity progresses, it will be important to ensure that inclusion remains embedded within organisational decision-making, workforce planning, employee experience and change delivery. STFC is committed to ensuring that change is implemented in a way that is fair, transparent and informed by evidence, while maintaining an inclusive culture where all colleagues are able to contribute and thrive.

In addition to funding research across areas such as particle physics, astronomy and space science, STFC builds and operates some of the UK's largest research facilities. This creates a complex ecosystem of people, partners and institutions that drive innovation in science and technology, contributing to economic growth, industrial capability and wider societal benefit.

> **Creativity and problem-solving are at the core of research and innovation, and the evidence is clear. Diversity and inclusion have positive impacts on creativity, innovation, and performance**

UKRI's equality, diversity and inclusion strategy 2023-27

> **Inclusion is fundamental to how STFC operates. This plan sets out a clear shift from awareness to delivery, embedding EDI within the systems, decisions and behaviours that shape everyday experience. It recognises the complexity of this work and the importance of a proportionate, well-governed approach that supports both our people and our organisational mission.**

Amarjit Bassan, STFC EDI Manager

STFC's research spans the full scale of discovery, from the largest astronomical phenomena to the fundamental building blocks of matter, delivering impact that extends well beyond the scientific community. Through our funding and facilities, the UK has played a leading role in landmark discoveries such as the Higgs Boson at CERN and the first direct detection of gravitational waves. These achievements not only advance knowledge but also inspire future generations to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

We are one of the largest science delivery organisations in the UK, employing staff across scientific, engineering and technical roles. This scale and breadth of activity place us at the centre of the UK's research and innovation ecosystem.

As part of UK Research and Innovation, STFC plays a critical role in maintaining the UK's global leadership in science and technology. Delivering this ambition depends on our ability to attract, develop and retain a diverse range of talent, and to create an environment in which that talent can thrive and contribute fully.

UKRI's EDI strategy and action plans

Excellence in research and innovation depends on a culture that values and supports a diversity of people, ideas and perspectives. Broadening participation strengthens the quality of research, enhances innovation and increases the potential to deliver benefits for society and the economy.

UKRI's EDI Strategy provides a unifying framework to support a more inclusive research and innovation system. It has been shaped through consultation, engagement and ongoing work across UKRI and the wider sector, drawing on evidence, insight and experience to inform a coordinated approach.

The strategy is delivered through a suite of action plans that operate at both system and organisational levels. These plans enable targeted interventions in different contexts while maintaining alignment to shared priorities. They are designed as evolving frameworks, allowing approaches to be tested, refined and scaled based on learning and impact.

This portfolio approach connects activity across People, Culture and Talent priorities, supporting greater consistency, visibility and shared learning across UKRI. It also ensures that progress is informed by data and engagement, and that action remains responsive to emerging challenges and opportunities as the research and innovation system continues to develop.

> **Diversity is not just about ethnicity, it's also about diversity of thought and experience. When we have a diverse group of people working together, we come up with more creative solutions.**

Dr. Maggie Aderin-Pocock

STFC's case for EDI

Thanks to our position as a major employer of scientific and engineering staff and through working collaboratively with many UK and international research institutions and industrial partners, STFC has a key role to play in developing and helping to secure the UK's position as a global leader in science, technology, and innovation.

To achieve this, the UK needs to attract, develop, and retain a diverse pool of talented people in science, technology, and innovation, and STFC has an ongoing programme to do so. Current data shows that 27% of STFC staff have declared that they are female, and 7% have declared they are from Black, Asian, or minority ethnic backgrounds. While these figures are broadly comparable with the demographics of our research scientific communities, they also suggest there is a wider pool of talent across the UK population that we could be reaching. This presents an opportunity to strengthen our work and deliver broader societal impact. However, we recognise that our current data only provides a limited view, particularly in relation to other characteristics such as disability, sexual orientation, and socio-economic background. Improving our understanding of the diversity of our workforce remains a priority.

UKRI's EDI strategy has four objectives:

1. **Foster a world-class research and innovation system, 'by everyone, for everyone'.**
2. **Include and support a diversity of people and ideas through our funding and partnerships.**
3. **Create a more inclusive and fair organisational culture, where everyone can contribute and participate and feels valued and respected.**
4. **Advance and grow knowledge and capability to support a thriving research and innovation system by being a creative, evidence-based, and evidence-informed organisation.**

The case for why EDI is important to STFC is aligned with these objectives and falls into the following four areas:

A. We have an ethical and legal responsibility to our staff to provide a workplace that is equitable and where all feel included and valued. As one of the largest parts of UKRI, we can support the delivery of parts of the UKRI workforce EDI plan. By developing the right working environment and culture, we can also help to mitigate risks around retention and recruitment. In addition, under the Public Sector Equality Duty, we are required to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- advance equality of opportunity
- foster good relations

B. Diverse organisations are more effective, innovative and better positioned for long-term success. McKinsey's research continues to reinforce the link between diversity and organisational performance. Diversity Matters Even More (2023) found that organisations in the top quartile for diverse leadership are 39 percent more likely to outperform their peers. More recent analysis in Women in the Workplace (2024 and 2025) highlights that while many organisations prioritise equality, diversity and inclusion, progress remains uneven, with persistent barriers in progression and a clear gap between ambition and delivery. Together, this evidence demonstrates that inclusion requires sustained, system-level action rather than standalone initiatives.

For STFC, as a mission-driven organisation operating at the forefront of science and technology, this is both a strategic and operational priority. Attracting, developing and retaining a diverse range of talent strengthens our ability to innovate, solve complex problems and sustain critical technical capability. Expanding access to a broader talent pool not only enhances creativity and performance but also helps address future skills risks in key areas. Embedding inclusive recruitment, progression and retention practices is therefore essential to maintaining excellence in research and innovation and delivering long-term organisational impact.

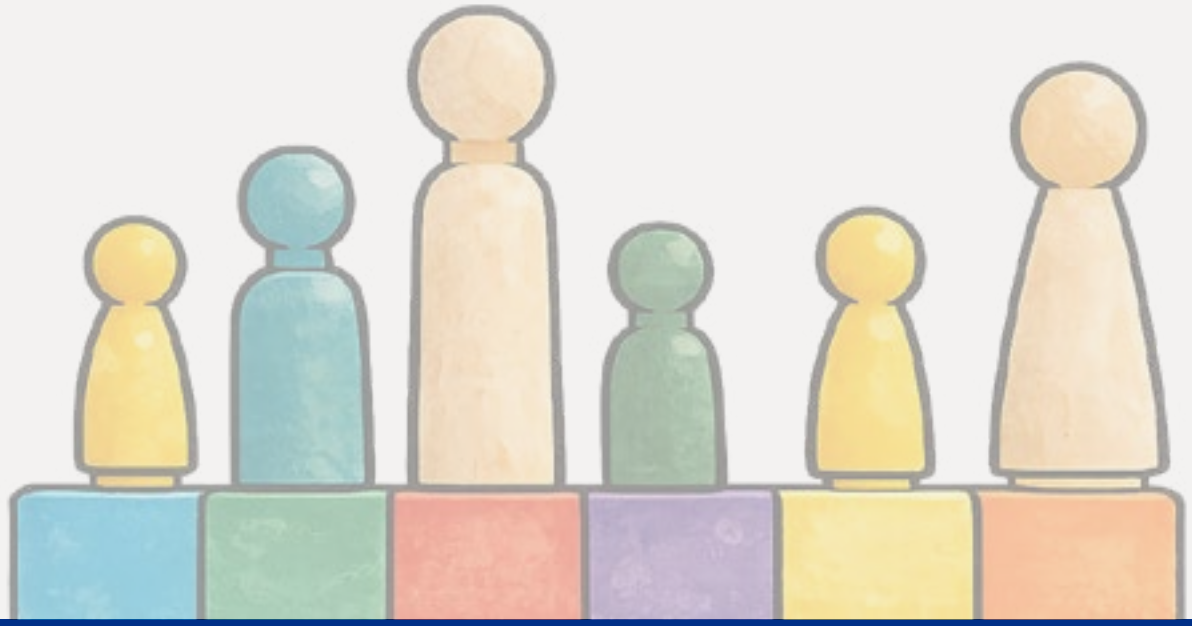
C. STFC has a responsibility as a publicly funded organisation to represent, engage and benefit society through its research, innovation and public investment.

As a publicly funded organisation, STFC has a responsibility not only to deliver world-leading research and innovation, but also to ensure that the benefits of our work are accessible to the widest possible range of people and communities. Equality, diversity and inclusion help deepen public trust, improve the relevance and impact of our science, and help ensure that the opportunities created through our facilities, funding, partnerships and public engagement activities are open to all.

This means working to remove barriers to participation, broaden representation across our research and innovation ecosystem, and engage communities that have historically been marginalised in STEM. By doing so, we strengthen our relationship with the public, support a more inclusive research culture and maximise the societal impact of the public investment entrusted to us.

> **Building a highly skilled workforce is essential to maintaining the UK's leadership in science and technology. To do so, we must ensure the UK continues to attract, develop and retain talented scientists, researchers, entrepreneurs and innovators across all career stages**

UK Government UK Science and Technology Framework (2025)



D. STFC can make a difference to the national skills agenda. Women and people from minority ethnic backgrounds are significantly under-represented in STEM, particularly in physics and our research communities. We can help develop national skills pipelines to support our research and business ecosystems, including in emerging technology areas where the UK has an opportunity to be world-leading.

To translate our commitment into meaningful change, we have developed this action plan in collaboration with teams across STFC. Colleagues from multiple departments, including scientific divisions, operations, and professional services, have contributed to shaping our priorities and identifying where progress is most needed. Their input has helped ensure that the plan is both ambitious and grounded in the day-to-day realities of our organisation.

> **STFC's success depends on attracting talented people, creating an environment where everyone can contribute at their best, and ensuring our research and innovation benefit society as a whole. This Action Plan reflects our commitment to embedding equality, diversity and inclusion into the way we lead, make decisions and deliver our mission. It is fundamental to achieving scientific excellence and maintaining the UK's position as a global leader in research and innovation.**

Michele Dougherty. STFC - Executive Chair

EDI Action Plan for 2026–27

This action plan operates as a rolling 12-month framework, designed to embed equality, diversity and inclusion into how STFC operates, rather than positioning it as a standalone programme. It will be reviewed and updated regularly to reflect emerging priorities, data and organisational need.

This phase builds on progress made in previous years and reflects a deliberate shift from activity towards impact. The focus is on strengthening internal capability, embedding EDI within core systems and decision-making, and ensuring consistent application across the organisation. As this foundation continues to mature, future iterations will extend further into our external influence, including our research communities, partners and wider public engagement.

The actions are structured around four priority areas aligned to UKRI's strategic objectives. They are designed to be practical, measurable and grounded in delivery, with clear ownership and a focus on outcomes. Together, they set out how STFC will strengthen inclusion across its culture, workforce and external role.

A. Create an Inclusive Workplace

STFC employs staff across multiple UK sites and operates within a complex, high-performing research and innovation environment. We have a responsibility to provide a workplace that is equitable, inclusive and enables all colleagues to contribute fully. This includes embedding inclusive practices into leadership, systems and day-to-day working, ensuring that EDI is reflected in how decisions are made and how the organisation operates.

A.1. Inclusive leadership and culture:

These actions are focused on engendering a supportive and inclusive culture throughout STFC. This includes improving understanding of our colleagues so that we can work together more effectively. The actions should also help to attract and retain staff, which is one of the greatest risks to the successful delivery of our mission.

A.1.1 Analyse workforce insight data and develop interventions

Review and analyse workforce insight data, including pulse survey results where applicable, to identify areas of strength, emerging trends and priority concerns. Address identified issues through targeted interventions, and support continuous improvement in employee experience, inclusion and organisational culture.

A.1.2 Strengthen visibility and integration of EDI across National Laboratories

Promote and support EDI activity across National Laboratories to increase visibility, share good practice and embed inclusive approaches into local operations, decision-making and ways of working.

A.1.3 Embed EDI element within the STFC Technicians Conference

Integrate a dedicated EDI strand into the annual STFC Technicians Conference, aligned to the Technician Commitment pillars of visibility, recognition, career development and sustainability. Use the conference to surface lived experience, identify barriers to inclusion and progression within technical roles, and co-develop a targeted EDI action plan with technicians and stakeholders.

A.2. Workplace accessibility:

Our sites provide a workplace for several thousand people, as well as hosting thousands of visitors each year, including facility users and school visits. These actions are focused on providing healthy and accessible working environments across all of STFC's estates and supporting our future growth and development plans.

A.2.1 Embed and operationalise STFC Accessible and Inclusive Design Standards across the estate

Implement the STFC Accessible and Inclusive Design Standards across new builds and refurbishments to improve usability and inclusive workplace design. Ensure the standards are consistently applied within estate planning, project delivery and decision-making, with clear governance and oversight.

A.3. Progression and promotion:

These have been identified by staff as priority areas for improving EDI at STFC.

A.3.1 Continue to evaluate the STFC review promotions process to strengthen fairness, transparency and progression outcomes

Following implementation, embed the revised review promotion process across all Directorates, ensuring consistent application, clear communication and ongoing support to managers and staff. Monitor outcomes to assess fairness and transparency, and identify areas for continuous improvement.

B. Increase diversity in STFC

To help succeed in our mission, we need to convene diverse teams and encourage diversity of thought. These actions are focused on increasing diversity in STFC and also exploring options to improve mobility and opportunity in our R&I ecosystem.

B.1. Building EDI capability and confidence:

B.1.1 Build on 2025 delivery to expand targeted EDI training aligned to local needs.

Building on the targeted EDI training delivered in 2025/26, work with departments and teams across STFC to design and deliver a programme of bespoke EDI sessions that respond to local challenges, team dynamics and the needs of under-represented groups. Ensure training is practical, context-specific and supports teams to apply inclusive behaviours in their day-to-day work.

C. Represent the public good

As a publicly funded organisation, STFC has a responsibility to ensure that the public investment entrusted to us delivers the greatest possible benefit to society. Equality, diversity and inclusion help us achieve this by strengthening fairness, transparency and representation across our research and innovation ecosystem. The following actions focus on embedding inclusive practices within our grant funding, broadening participation and representation across our research communities and advisory structures, and engaging strategically with stakeholders to strengthen public trust, maximise the impact of our work and ensure that the opportunities created through STFC are accessible to the widest possible range of people.

C.1. Grant funding:

These actions are focused on encouraging diversity of the people we fund.

C.1.1 Continue to collaborate across UKRI to understand the outcomes of innovative pilots and review current best practice in peer review.

C.1.2 Continue to improve the diversity of members on our grants and advisory panels, including maintaining the target for at least 30% women and encouraging diversity across all characteristics. To encourage inclusive and accessible panel/community meetings and contribute to encouraging diversity among the people we fund.

C.1.3 Develop a standard set of EDI information to be applied across PD PPAN grants and panel recruitment. This will enable an overview of grants EDI information across PD.

C.2. Engaging with stakeholders.

C.2.1 Undertake strategic discussions with national bodies such as the Institute of Physics (IoP) regarding the public perception of physics and engineering and their value to STEM careers.

C.2.2 Maintain and continuously update the STFC EDI webpage to reflect activity, impact and representation

Ensure the STFC EDI webpage is regularly updated and maintained as a dynamic platform that reflects current priorities, activity and impact. Expand and refresh content to showcase the diversity of our work and the people we fund, providing visible role models and clear, accessible information that demonstrates STFC's ongoing commitment to EDI.

C.2.3 Engage with our research communities on the forward development of our EDI activities and introduce regular EDI updates at SB PPAN.y

D. Contribute to the National Skills Agenda

Delivering world-leading research and innovation depends on a diverse, skilled and inclusive workforce. STFC has a unique role in inspiring future talent, developing skills and creating opportunities across the research and innovation ecosystem. These actions focus on how we can use our people, funding, partnerships and facilities to strengthen the UK's skills pipeline and support sustainable economic growth.

D.1. Public Engagement

Public Engagement activity contributes to STFC's national skills ambitions by broadening access to STEM, increasing awareness of STEM careers and engaging diverse and underserved communities. While these activities contribute to EDI objectives, they are delivered primarily through STFC's wider public engagement mission and support broader educational, societal and economic outcomes.

D.1.1 Wonder

Continue delivery of the Wonder Initiative to support engagement with young people from underserved communities, including aiming for a minimum of 40% participation from schools and young people within the 40% most deprived areas of the UK. The National Labs PE programme will achieve 36% reach with Wonder, reflecting the socio-economic demographics of the communities around the sites. Wonder demographics are prioritised in all STFC PE activities – grants funding, partnership working and NLPE delivery.

D.1.2 Continue delivery of the Early Career Engagement programme, at the STFC facilities sites, through which new apprentices and graduates carry out four days of PE training and delivery in their first 18 months on site, to increase visibility of STEM pathways, role models and opportunities for young people from diverse backgrounds.

D.2. Skills Centre and Early Careers

Develop and implement a structured Early Careers EDI journey.

D.2.1 Design and deliver a two-stage EDI offer for all apprentice and graduate cohorts, comprising the existing induction at onboarding and a follow-up session within six months focused on lived experience, inclusion in practice and reflection. Integrate feedback from both sessions with existing temperature-check data to identify themes and inform the continuous improvement of the early careers experience. Use this insight to identify patterns in experience, progression and any areas of friction, and translate findings into targeted interventions that improve outcomes.

D.3. Improve diversity among early career researchers

These actions focus on increasing the diversity of the students and early-career researchers we support, with the longer-term aim of attracting a wider pool of talented people into research and innovation careers.

D.3.1 Continue to encourage diverse recruitment in PhD studentship by sharing best practice from across UKRI with all doctoral investments and pointing to the new statement of expectations for doctoral funding across UKRI.

D.3.2 Continue to request departmental statements outlining the process used to select ERF (Ernest Rutherford Fellowship) candidates. ETCC (Education, Training and Careers Committee) will continue to review EDI information about the ERF process.

> **Inclusion matters at STFC. Not as an abstract concept, but as something that shows up in how we recruit and develop people, design our spaces, work together and support one another day-to-day.**

Liz Fellman. Executive Director of Strategy, Planning and Communications