

ROYAL VOLUNTARY SERVICE INCLUSION PLAN

2023-2026



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We want to build a culture where all our people – volunteers and staff – can be their authentic selves and feel proud to belong to the Royal Voluntary Service community. Increasing the diversity of our people will be part of our approach, but Royal Voluntary Service will only fully succeed if our staff and volunteers can thrive in environments where they feel they belong, and their wellbeing is fully supported. Belonging is a fundamental human need, and our Inclusion Plan will support Royal Voluntary Service to create a truly inclusive workplace, where everyone is valued and feels that they belong.

‘The Road Ahead 2023: Keeping up the pace on equity, diversity, and inclusion’ by NCVO recognises that as a sector, our drive to reach and represent our diverse society has strengthened in recent years and as long as inequalities endure in our communities, that drive must not fade. **Research by NCVO, Nottingham Trent University and Sheffield Hallam University** in July 2021 found that nearly four out of five voluntary organisations had plans to address equality, diversity, and inclusion. Whilst over half (59%) had revised their EDI approach since March 2020.

We want every individual and every team to have the knowledge and aspiration to contribute to our charity being a diverse and vibrant community in which inclusion is at the heart of all we do. This means our people are empowered to value difference, understanding that it is central to meeting the needs of our diverse communities. It requires that we listen to a range of perspectives and understand that each of us has different experience, and only by bringing these together can we provide the right support in our communities for everyone who needs our services.

Key drivers that shape our Inclusion Plan are:

- We are building an inclusive culture in which individual difference and the contributions of our volunteers and employees are recognised and valued.

- We are creating an environment that promotes dignity and respect for all.
- We take a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination, bullying and harassment, including but not limited to the Protected Characteristics.
- We provide resources and training to all employees and volunteers to ensure they are fully aware of equality, diversity, and inclusion issues and their responsibilities in these areas.
- We embed equality, diversity, and inclusion into our policies, procedures, and everyday working practices.
- We ensure the importance of equality, diversity, and inclusion is communicated throughout the employee and volunteer lifecycle.
- We are building a monitoring and evaluation framework to measure the impact of our Inclusion Plan.

This Inclusion Plan has been approved by our Trustees and our Leadership Team, following a comprehensive consultation and engagement exercise with colleagues and volunteers across the Charity. Our Trustees and Leadership Team are fully committed to its implementation. The Inclusion Plan also operates alongside, and complements, our People Plan 2023-26.

FOREWORD FROM OUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE & CHAIR, BOARD OF TRUSTEES

We are very proud to introduce Royal Voluntary Service’s Inclusion Plan 2023-2026, which confirms our commitment to inclusion and outlines our key objectives for making Royal Voluntary Service a more diverse and inclusive organisation.

Our Inclusion Plan builds upon what we have already achieved and pledges to further address inequality for our people and communities, backed up with purpose and action. It has been developed from listening to our staff and volunteers, and their valuable feedback provides the basis of our inclusion aims and objectives.

The world around us is constantly evolving, facing new challenges and our communities need our services more than ever. While the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic is, we hope, behind us its impact is still felt through hospital admissions, long-COVID cases, and ongoing anxiety levels among vulnerable people. The NHS has a huge backlog to contend with along with workforce pressures. Emergency services are stretched to the limit as capacity has struggled to keep up with demand. On the heels of COVID-19 has come the cost-of-living crisis and this has layered on another burden.

It is also still an everyday occurrence that people are treated less favourably and discriminated against because of who they are. We want to make sure that how we shape our organisation, treat our people, and deliver our wider services contributes to addressing these issues and that we are actively contributing to building an inclusive society, in which everyone has an equal chance to thrive. This continues our work on broadening access to volunteering opportunities, knowing the value it brings to individuals’ lives.

We have an important role to play in building strong and connected volunteering communities. We want to ensure volunteering is available to everyone, and that we create dynamic and flexible volunteering opportunities so there is a role for anyone who would like to get involved to support others in their community. Our Inclusion Plan is for everyone; it requires us to work together and live our Stella Values to build a diverse and inclusive culture. We know this is what will support us to be a brilliant place to work and volunteer, whilst we continue to deliver our services to those who need them.



Catherine Johnstone CBE
Chief Executive



Stephen Dunmore OBE
Chair

RELATIONSHIP WITH OUR STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The Royal Voluntary Service Strategic Framework outlines the Charity’s Mission, Vision, and Stella Values, along with its operating principles and strategic objectives for the period. The Framework details the impact we will make in Britain over this timeframe. Our Inclusion Plan 2023-26 has been developed part-way through the Charity’s Strategic Framework and is informed by it.

OUR VISION

People across Britain are engaged in voluntary service, freely giving their time, talent and life experience to help tackle pressing challenges in their diverse communities. Their service makes them and Britain healthier and happier.

OUR MISSION

Inspiring and enabling people to give the gift of voluntary service to meet the needs of the day in their communities.

OUR VALUES



OUR OPERATIONAL PRINCIPLES*

- Royal Voluntary Service will aim to ensure that its employees and volunteers reflect the make-up of the communities it serves.

OUR IMPACT*

- More people benefit from giving their time, talent and life experience to voluntary service.
- Improve the accessibility of volunteering for everyone.
 - Offer a broad range of flexible volunteering opportunities.

THE 4 PILLARS OF OUR INCLUSION PLAN

PILLAR 1 Building a Culture of Belonging	PILLAR 2 Valuing Difference	PILLAR 3 Inspiring our Communities Through Inclusive Volunteering	PILLAR 4 Delivering Excellence Through Inclusion
--	---------------------------------------	---	--

* Relevant sections to the Inclusion Plan



CONTEXT

There has been a rise in awareness of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) through a collision of the Pandemic, global events (particularly campaigns around racial justice) and increased attention and positive action on EDI within the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Sector.

We recognise that EDI encompasses a broad range of areas, identities, and intersectionality, including age, gender, religion, ethnicity, gender identity, disability, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, and education.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has impacted us all in an unprecedented way. The disproportionate impact on many communities has magnified and focused attention on the impact of inequality, racism, health inequalities, culture wars, and other discriminatory behaviours and actions. For Royal Voluntary Services to navigate these challenging times, it has never been more vital for our volunteers and staff to be truly representative of the communities we serve. Similarly, our volunteers must be well supported and have volunteering opportunities that are flexible, responsive and co-created with the communities they support. To build and retain our brilliant people, we need to focus on inclusive recruitment, learning and development and a clear focus on people's wellbeing.

At the start of 2022 we invested in dedicated Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) resource to support the Charity to drive forward and embed Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. Building on a momentum of positive cultural change for our volunteers and staff, the EDI Change Programme aims to work across all areas of the Charity, both culturally and through our service delivery. We have surveyed our staff and consulted with a wide range of stakeholders including our volunteers. We have refreshed our EDI training, set up an Equality Working Group, aligned our diversity data sets and re-written our EDI policy and guidance, but this is just the start.

We know it's crucial that we build a culture where everyone's identity and difference is valued, and respected, and everyone has equal access to opportunity. It's also crucial that our communities are represented, their needs understood, and their voices heard in the work we do. We need to be responsive and efficient, but also bold and ambitious in how we serve our communities. This means we need our people to feel empowered to lead inclusively, thrive as part of a team, celebrate success, and deliver the best possible services. Our Inclusion Plan will directly address key areas of focus and include timebound action plans. The vision is to transform the Charity into a bold, future-proofed organisation that fosters and encourages difference of all kinds, set in the context of a national volunteering organisation.

It is our ambition that inclusion will be a key enabler in supporting Royal Voluntary Service to become a leader within the Sector, by embedding equality, diversity, and inclusion across every area of the organisation to create meaningful, long-lasting cultural change. We know this aspiration will require a change in approach, so we have created a robust framework for the next 3 years which combines accountability, leadership, and behavioural change. The success of our Inclusion Plan depends on us creating strong relationships between our people and communities, and that involves every one of us contributing to making Royal Voluntary Service the best it can be.

PILLAR 1

BUILDING A CULTURE OF INCLUSION

AIM

We will develop and support our people to be culturally aware, and make sure that every new person joining Royal Voluntary Service understands the behaviours we expect and the opportunities they can benefit from. We will embed inclusion into our governance and our policies, and improve our physical and digital spaces, to make sure everyone can access Royal Voluntary Service in an inclusive and open way.

WE WILL

- Embed inclusion into our volunteering lifecycle, including engagement and outreach and make sure our volunteer recruitment is inclusive and diverse.
- Value and include our volunteers in our service development and equip them with the skills and resources they need.
- Create a network of organisations in our communities, exchange knowledge and ideas, and learn ways of working with under-represented groups.
- Refine our recruitment process so that it is accessible and not overly formal by minimising form-filling and being mindful of the language we use.
- Establish effective communication channels providing opportunities for feedback and engagement, building our volunteer voice, creating a sense of belonging and that our volunteers are recognised as integral to the success of our charity.

IMPACT

- We will have increased the diversity of our volunteers to better reflect and support the communities we serve.
- Our volunteers will uphold Royal Voluntary Service inclusive behaviours and be ambassadors for the Charity.
- We will be a trusted partner in the diverse communities we serve.
- We will have improved our communication pathways with volunteers so that we can better understand both the experiences of our current volunteers and the barriers faced by those not currently represented in our volunteer community, and we will have developed plans to remove these barriers.

PILLAR 2

VALUING DIFFERENCE

AIM

We will create a workplace where our staff can speak up and suggest new, innovative ways of achieving our aims and goals. Our leaders (trustees and executives) will be empowered to talk about Inclusion, and our volunteers and staff will be too. Visible and invisible differences will be supported and celebrated, and our people will be trained effectively so that everyone understands why inclusion is relevant to them and how they can contribute.

WE WILL

- Support and develop inclusive leaders at all levels of the charity.
- Embed inclusion through our training and provide development opportunities for all our people.
- Celebrate inclusive practice across the Charity through awards and recognition.
- Introduce community and customer facing staff training on inclusion and cultural awareness.
- Make inclusion relevant to everyone, supported through allyship.

IMPACT

- The Board of Trustees take a leadership role in prioritising equality, diversity, and inclusion.
- Inspired leaders and managers have inclusion learning pathways, and have the confidence and knowledge to champion inclusion.
- There is clear accountability for inclusion at all levels of the Charity.
- Inclusion is embedded across all areas of work and championed by people from all backgrounds across the whole Charity.
- A comprehensive training and development programme is in place, with Inclusion for All at its core.



PILLAR 3

INSPIRING COMMUNITIES THROUGH INCLUSIVE VOLUNTEERING

AIM

We want to motivate more people to volunteer but to do this we need to empower our people to become more open and confident in embracing diversity through our volunteering opportunities. We will therefore develop opportunities that are accessible and flexible to ensure we reduce any barriers faced by those in our communities who are motivated to volunteer.

WE WILL

- Embed inclusion into our volunteering lifecycle, including engagement and outreach and make sure our volunteer recruitment is inclusive and diverse.
- Value and include our volunteers in our service development and equip them with the skills and resources they need.
- Create a network of organisations in our communities, exchange knowledge and ideas, and learn ways of working with under-represented groups.
- Refine our recruitment process so that it is accessible and not overly formal by minimising form-filling and being mindful of the language we use.
- Establish effective communication channels providing opportunities for feedback and engagement, building our volunteer voice, creating a sense of belonging and that our volunteers are recognised as integral to the success of our charity.

IMPACT

- We will have increased the diversity of our volunteers to better reflect and support the communities we serve.
- Our volunteers will uphold Royal Voluntary Service inclusive behaviours and be ambassadors for the Charity.
- We will be a trusted partner in the diverse communities we serve.
- We will have improved our communication pathways with volunteers so that we can better understand both the experiences of our current volunteers and the barriers faced by those not currently represented in our volunteer community, and we will have developed plans to remove these barriers.

PILLAR 4

DELIVERING EXCELLENCE THROUGH INCLUSION

AIM

We will embed inclusion in every area of work to allow us to achieve excellence. We will develop our practices in recruitment and selection, procurement, communication, performance management, and governance, and in every service and department. We will increase transparency and accountability both internally and externally by publishing our inclusion work and decisions.

WE WILL

- Work with Trustees to establish governance processes to ensure our work is owned by senior leaders and continues to progress with momentum and which will include an Equality Working Group.
- Map compliance against the EDI Principle of the Charity Governance Code and develop an action plan in response to address any development areas.
- Continue to work with other charities to ensure our work is reflective of best practice and to make the best use of our resources.
- Make inclusion a central part of performance management and ensure accountability for inclusion is widely and deeply embedded.
- Review and refresh recruitment and promotion processes.
- Adopt best practice procurement and supply chain management practices.
- Introduce inclusion champions who are trained in supporting our teams to develop their inclusion knowledge at a local level.
- Work toward appropriate inclusion quality marks.

IMPACT

- Accessible local inclusion plans will be in place, with reporting frameworks that increase transparency and drive best practice processes that improve engagement.
- There will be a clear accountability framework for delivery of the Inclusion Plan, that is widely understood, and responsibility for delivery will be clearly delegated through action plans for each area of the Charity.
- Suppliers will understand the importance Royal Voluntary Service places on inclusion in procurement and contract management, and they will adhere to high standards of diversity and inclusion.
- Improved knowledge at all levels of the organisation which improves how we deliver all our business functions based on our understanding of protected and inclusive characteristics.



MONITORING KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND MEASURING IMPACT

To successfully embed our Inclusion Plan, it is important that we demonstrate we are monitoring and measuring the improvements we are making. Some of these measures are driven centrally but we will also include local measures of progress and success. We will publish our progress against KPI's to ensure visibility to our people and key Stakeholders.

Individual work programmes will have their own milestones and measures, but collectively the main measures we will use include (but not limited to):

- We will implement an audit cycle to ensure that policies, processes, and systems are in line with current EDI best practice and changes in legislation.
- 80% agreement with EDI statement in employee and volunteer engagement surveys.
- We will produce quarterly data reports on the diversity of workforce & volunteers compared using Census 2021 data.
- Regularly review our EDI priorities through feedback and information to ensure they reflect the reality for our people and communities.
- Information reported and monitored against mandatory requirements (e.g., Gender Pay Gap reporting) and develop plans to report on other pay gaps such as ethnicity and disability.
- We will work towards external best practice accreditations e.g., Disability Confident and Best Companies.
- We will include questions related to inclusion in staff and volunteer surveys; responses will be analysed and acted upon, and we will feed back our actions across the Charity.

- We will analyse our complaints on a quarterly basis to identify any barriers to inclusion.
- We will continue to develop a communication framework including staff networks, safe space discussions and 'lunch and learns'.
- We will analyse feedback from exit interviews on a quarterly basis to identify any barriers to inclusion.

Action Plans for each department will underpin this plan and we will agree priorities each year to guide our action on inclusion. This will be determined by the EDI Working Group, and Leadership Team, following review of the annual diversity and inclusion report and will ideally be set in April each year to influence and shape inclusion action for the following year.

Taking a priority setting approach will not preclude the Charity from taking action on other aspects of inclusion where action is appropriate, and we will always take action where standards are identified to be below an expected or acceptable level. Action and progress on delivering our annual inclusion priorities will be led through the EDI Group and the People and Remuneration Committee, reporting to our Board of Trustees.



Policy Statement from the Royal Voluntary Service Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Royal Voluntary Service is committed to supporting and promoting Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) and this commitment means we are stronger together.

This includes tackling all forms of discrimination and inequality in both the workplace and the services the Charity provides.

This commitment is embraced by our Board of Trustees and informs all our activities and their impact on our service users, employees, volunteers, and other stakeholders.

We recognise that we are on a journey to achieving our ambition to be a fully inclusive organisation that reflects the diversity of the communities we serve.

“”

**OUR STAFF ARE HERE TO
SUPPORT OUR VOLUNTEERS
WHO PROVIDE PRACTICAL
SUPPORT AND VITAL
COMPANIONSHIP TO
HELP PEOPLE GET THE BEST
OUT OF LIFE.**

Catherine Johnstone CBE
Chief Executive



**ROYAL
VOLUNTARY
SERVICE**

royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk

Royal Voluntary Service is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales with company number 2520413. Registered charity 1015988 (England and Wales) & SC038924 (Scotland). All statistics and data correct at time of publication.

CS3731_0623