Skills for Care Action Plan 2025-26

Leadership Team Sponsor	Oonagh Smyth, CEO, and Tristram Gardner, Deputy CEO
People Team Leads	Ruth Stickler, Director of People and Mel Hutchins, People and Development Partner
Number of employees (as at 01 April 2025)	207

Introduction

In 2024/25 Skills for Care, alongside many participating Local Authorities, took part in the Social Care Workforce Race Equality Standard (SC-WRES) continuous improvement programme as a part of our commitment to achieving an anti-racist culture and workplace. The programme forms part of our wider equality and diversity commitment within our Belonging strategy. Being part of this programme has given us the opportunity to take a forensic analysis of our data to identify where we can continue our journey to creating a workforce where everyone feels they belong.

Summary of our findings:

The data tells us that colleagues from a Black and minoritized ethnic background at Skills for Care are:

- Less likely to be represented in pay bands above £40,000.
- Half as likely to be appointed from shortlisting compared to white colleagues.
- As likely to have funded non-mandatory continuous professional development compared to white colleagues.
- 20% less likely to leave the organisation than white colleagues.
- Not currently represented in senior management roles.

Access our individual data report.

Colleague engagement and our action plan.

Cultivating a culture of Belonging, and promoting positive change is the responsibility of everyone who works at Skills for Care. Our Senior Managers are committed to leading the programme of continuous improvement. We have started this journey by sharing our SC-WRES data with every colleague, giving everyone the space for conversation and reflection, and sharing ideas on areas for improvement to address the areas we know we want to change.

Our action plan has been co–produced. Our people, networks, expert reference groups, and participating local authorities who have generously shared their experiences and learnings, have played an important part in producing this action plan. Through regular Belonging and SC-WRES briefings, updates and further engagement opportunities, we will be monitoring the progress of our action plan and future data analysis processes will enable us to assess our progress and impact. We commit to reporting on progress within the action plan via our Senior Managers and Enabling Leadership Team.

Metric 1

Percentage of directly employed staff from a minority ethnic background within each pay band, compared with the percentage of white staff.

Objective: to enhance diversity within all Teams so there is more proportionate representation of colleagues from a minority ethnic background across our structure, particularly in roles earning higher than £40,000.

Actions	Indicators of improvement and achievement	Timescales to start seeing change
- Advertise all roles internally and externally where possible, providing business reasons where it is only possible or appropriate to advertise internally. - Refresh and relaunch of Recruiting for EDI Principles, using expertise of internal networks to evolve and embed. - Refresh of EDI commitment and equal opportunities statements in recruitment campaigns and adverts. - Introduce a mechanism for capturing ethnicity for internal moves and promotion opportunities. - Internal career pathways reviewed by internal working groups with support from People Team, and processes surrounding succession planning made transparent. - Advertise roles via EDI specific platforms (Diversify and Black Leadership boards, potential to include BYP) to increase diversity of applicants and reduce likelihood of all White shortlists. - Explore and understand any barriers for colleagues (and new starters) in declaring their full EDI profile in our HR systems, providing rationale (WRES and Ethnicity Pay Reporting) to provide context.	- A greater proportion of applicants from a minoritized ethnic background than previous years. - A greater proportion of shortlisted candidates from minoritized ethnic background than previous years. - Reduction of all White shortlists. - Increased proportion of colleagues from a minority ethnic background employed directly by the organization at an aggregate level. - Increased proportion of colleagues from a minority ethnic background in roles earning more than £40,000 per annum. - Increased evidence of internal progression for colleagues from a minoritized ethnic background. - Reduction in % of unknown ethnicity in reporting.	- Review impact of large recruitment campaign in Q4 2024-25 and Q1 2025-26 by the end of Q2 2025-26. - Annual review of data against this indicator (Q4 2025-26).

Metric 2

Relative likelihood of directly employed staff from a minority ethnic background being appointed from shortlisting in the last 12 months, compared to white staff.

Objective: to increase the likelihood of applicants from a minority ethnic background being appointed from shortlisting.

Actions	Indicators of improvement and achievement	Timescales to start seeing change
▪ Review job descriptions and person specifications to remove idioms, acronyms and superfluous nuanced language. Limit number of criteria, and provide transparency on what will be assessed at application and during interview. ▪ Include indicators (for the People Team only) at application stage to indicate where ethnicity is declared. Introduce positive action to guarantee interview for applicants from minoritized ethnic background who meet all essential criteria, reducing likelihood of all White shortlists. ▪ Remove educational requirements unless strictly necessary for the role (i.e. regulated professions), and ensuring this corporate position is reflected in our Recruitment Policy and manager guidance. ▪ Unconscious Bias to be part of mandatory training offer for all recruiting and people managers. Assess whether Bias-Aware Performance Management is possible to implement at Skills for Care. ▪ Increase visibility of our commitment to our internal Belonging Strategy and WRES Action plan to potential applicants. ▪ Additional training and guidance for people managers including understanding the difference between positive action and positive discrimination, and allyship for leaders. ▪ Work with internal networks and colleagues with lived experience to gather feedback on recruitment actions and changes.	▪ 100% of recruiting managers to complete Unconscious Bias and Diversity, Equality and Inclusion e-Learnings prior to making recruitment decisions. ▪ Increased diversity in the conversion rate from shortlisted to appointed applicants. ▪ Increased Black and minoritized colleagues being recruited across all levels/pay bands. ▪ Qualitative feedback from new starters / colleagues to understand the impact of the actions the organization has taken. ▪ Qualitative feedback from recruiting managers to understand the impact of the actions the organization has taken. ▪ EDI, Belonging and Values based questions embedded in recruitment processes.	▪ Review impact of large recruitment campaign in Q4 2024-25 and Q1 2025-26 by the end of Q2 2025-26. ▪ Annual review of data against this indicator (Q4 2025-26).

▪ Work with external experts by lived experience and consultants (RERG, ENEI) to gain external perspectives on our recruitment actions and changes.	

Metric 3

Relative likelihood of directly employed staff from a minority ethnic background entering the formal disciplinary process compared to white staff. [This data is currently unavailable at Skills for Care]

Objective: to introduce a process of monitoring and reporting on disciplinary processes where possible, without breaching anonymity.

Actions	Indicators of improvement and achievement	Timescales to start seeing change
▪ Increased awareness of disciplinary processes for people managers and SMT colleagues. ▪ Start monitoring the diversity of colleagues entering formal disciplinary procedures and investigations. ▪ Consider actions for improvement, subject to data being available.	▪ Data provided for this metric in subsequent SC-WRES data reports if available without breaching anonymity.	▪ Update and analysis to be provided in next SC-WRES report – Q4 2025-26.

Metric 4 is not relevant at Skills for Care due to our workforce

Metric 5

Relative likelihood of directly employed staff from a minority ethnic background accessing funded non-mandatory continuous professional development in the last 12 months compared to white staff

Objective: to achieve and maintain equal access to funded non-mandatory CPD for minoritised ethnic colleagues and white colleagues.

Actions	Indicators of improvement and achievement	Timescales to start seeing change
▪ Review and embed requirements for Belonging Objectives and Personal Development objectives which currently form a part of SFC Performance Management framework. ▪ Introduce analysis of personal and professional development objectives by team, directorate, length of service and diversity.	▪ 90% of colleagues working towards a Belonging Objective. ▪ Shared Belonging objectives for LT and SMT through LEAD Framework. ▪ Increased proportion of personal and professional development objectives and plans for all colleagues (target 90%)	▪ Quarterly reports to show progress. ▪ Change expected by Q4 2025-26.

▪ Explore opportunities for colleagues to access Belonging and EDI specific training and development, e.g. Allyship. ▪ Explore further opportunities for Learning and Development across Skills for Care, to support all colleagues to reach their full potential. ▪ Explore opportunities for colleagues to access "Moving Up" developing aspiring leaders and managers.	▪ Evidence of colleagues from a minority ethnic background receiving access to leadership development.	

Metric 6

Relative likelihood of directly employed staff from a minority ethnic background experiencing harassment, bullying, or abuse from people who use social care, relatives, or the public in last 12 months compared to white staff
[This data is currently unavailable at Skills for Care]

Objective: Introduce system of monitoring this data and including data in future reports without breaching anonymity.

Actions	Indicators of improvement and achievement	Timescales to start seeing change
▪ Work with Compliance and Governance colleagues to identify mechanism for capturing ethnicity of colleagues subject to external complaints / concerns. ▪ Integrate questions about bullying and harassment into our engagement survey to address indicator 6.	▪ Data provided for this metric in subsequent SC-WRES data reports. ▪ Data available to evidence actions for improvement.	▪ Update and analysis to be provided in next SC-WRES report – Q4 2025-26.

Metric 7

Relative likelihood of directly employed staff from a minority ethnic background experiencing harassment, bullying, or abuse from colleagues or managers in last 12 months compared to white staff
[This data is currently unavailable at Skills for Care]

Objective: Introduce system of monitoring this data and including data in future reports without breaching anonymity.

Actions	Indicators of improvement and achievement	Timescales to start seeing change
▪ Review mechanism for capturing formal and informal grievances and complaints from colleagues about colleagues or managers, with a view to including in subsequent years.	▪ Data provided for this metric in subsequent SC-WRES data reports. ▪ Data available to evidence actions for improvement.	▪ Update and analysis to be provided in next SC-WRES report – Q4 2025-26.

▪ Integrate questions about bullying and harassment into our engagement survey		

Metric 8

Relative likelihood of directly employed staff from a minority ethnic background leaving the organisation during the last 12 months compared to white staff

Objective: to maintain low voluntary and involuntary turnover in colleagues from a minority ethnic background.

Actions	Indicators of improvement and achievement	Timescales to start seeing change
▪ Review exit interview process to include Belonging and EDI questions for colleagues leaving the organization. ▪ Conduct internal move "exit" interviews to understand reasons for remaining within the organisation. ▪ Implement "stay" interviews to gather further information on reasons for staying with the organisation. ▪ Calendar of Belonging activities and dates throughout the year, creating opportunities for colleagues to learn from each other. ▪ Health and Wellbeing passports to support the wellbeing of colleagues (and therefore increasing inclusion) embedded in one-to-one processes. ▪ Establish and maintain EDI Networks and connections between them, to better understand the perspectives of colleagues with shared lived experiences, and their allies.	▪ A greater understanding of why colleagues from a minority ethnic background leave the organisation, and why they stay with the organisation. ▪ Increased engagement with Belonging Activities across the organisation. ▪ Greater visibility of EDI networks and their activities. ▪ LT representation across the EDI networks. ▪ Greater proportion of Equality Impact Assessments produced for changes to policy, provision or practice across the organisation. ▪ Any language updates are shared across the organisation with commitment from leadership.	• Quarter reporting to provide progress, with review in Q4 2025-26.

▪ LT colleagues to join networks and actively attend meetings to understand the perspectives of colleagues with shared lived experiences.
▪ Continue to explore language used internally and externally with the RERG with any language updates being shared and adopted with a top down approach.
▪ Explore opportunities to introduce Equality Impact Assessment awareness across the organisation.

Metric 9

Percentage of directly employed staff from a minority ethnic background in senior manager membership roles compared with the percentage of white staff

Objective: to enhance diversity of senior management roles.

Actions	Indicators of improvement and achievement	Timescales to start seeing change
▪ Set shared LT and SMT objectives as a part of the LEAD framework to drive commitment to Belonging and increasing diversity from leadership. These objectives will include a focus on: - **Education** – continual learning and development to reinforce their roles as diversity champions. - **Recruitment** – enhancing efforts to recruit more candidates from underrepresented groups. - **Advocacy** – each leader will commit to champion an employee network to foster inclusion. ▪ Increase commitment towards anti-racist principles and allyship from leadership and management. ▪ Advertise all management and senior management roles on specific EDI job boards (e.g. Diversify and Black Leadership). ▪ Review job titles of all senior roles for advertising purposes to increase accessibility.	▪ Colleagues aware of LT and SMT commitment to Belonging and increasing diversity and including. ▪ Sense of Belonging enhanced in future pulse surveys and Engagement surveys. ▪ Increase in the diversity within the senior manager group.	▪ Turnover at this level is low, therefore timescales to start seeing change may be slower. Review progress in Q1 2026-27 and again at the end of Q4 2026-27.