



Diversifying Real Estate: Race

Guidebook commissioned by CPA & WPA NextGen

2026 edition

Foreword

This guidebook aims to help individuals and organisations make central London's built environment sector more accessible and inclusive for Black and ethnic minority people. It provides best practice examples, signposts to resources and personal reflections.

The original edition was published in April 2021, launching a series of themed diversity guidebooks commissioned by the Westminster Property Association (WPA) and City Property Association (CPA) NextGen networks, produced by London Property Alliance and supported by Gardiner & Theobald.

Five years on, this updated Race guidebook reflects the significant shifts in language, data, policy and public discourse that have shaped the inclusion landscape. From evolving terminology to new government frameworks and global movements for racial justice, the sector must continue to adapt and respond.

During this time, our initial consultancy partner BAME in Property has rebranded as PREACH Inclusion – Promoting Race, Ethnicity and Cultural Heritage. This change reflects a more nuanced understanding of identity and moves away from the term 'BAME', which has increasingly been recognised as reductive and inaccurate in describing ethnic diversity.

The original guide drew on extensive engagement: two London Property Alliance roundtables with members, local government stakeholders and co-opted experts; two podcasts exploring racial inequality and access to opportunity in real estate; a roundtable with Westminster City Council Chief Executive Stuart Love; discussions with Caroline Addy, Co-Chair of the City of London Corporation's Tackling Racism Taskforce; interviews with senior industry figures; and consultancy support from BAME in Property.

This updated edition has been written by Priya Aggarwal-Shah, founder and director of PREACH Inclusion. It builds on the original research (where still relevant), alongside her own consultancy expertise, research and thought leadership in the inclusion space.

We hope this guidebook will inspire and equip WPA and CPA members to take meaningful action, so that together, we can build a real estate sector that truly reflects and serves London's diverse communities.

I am delighted to once again write the foreword for this important guidebook – one that reflects years of experience, expertise, and passion invested in advancing diversity, equity and inclusion across the built environment. When I wrote the first edition five years ago, I could not have anticipated that only a few years later I would be revisiting and rewriting much of it. Yet the DEI landscape is ever evolving, shaped by peaks and troughs, progress and setbacks.

The past five years have seen major developments in global politics and society, including the rise of far-right rhetoric and anti-diversity sentiment. These shifts have influenced corporate approaches, with some organisations rolling back initiatives or reframing their commitments. Against this backdrop, the need for deeper conversations about race, privilege, and who shapes and creates space has become more urgent than ever.

During this time, my own journey has evolved – from leading a networking organisation in the built environment sector to establishing PREACH Inclusion®, a full-time consultancy dedicated to Promoting Race, Ethnicity and Cultural Heritage. The rebrand from BAME in Property signalled a necessary shift: moving away from a reductive acronym and towards language that centres identity, heritage and lived experience.

Despite challenges, there has been reassuring progress. Many companies now have internal diversity networks, sponsored by senior leaders and are genuinely effecting change. Through my consultancy and training, I have seen leadership teams step into spaces that may feel uncomfortable, but which allow them to listen, empathise and learn from different lived experiences. I have witnessed organisations hosting inclusive events that go beyond surface-level celebration to create meaningful dialogue.

Others are embedding inclusive practices into recruitment, from blind CVs to mentoring schemes, and into planning, by engaging communities more equitably in shaping the built environment.

We are also getting better at connecting with the next generation – going into schools, inspiring young people and starting engagement earlier to build a more diverse pipeline of future leaders.

This guidebook is informed and shaped by hundreds of conversations with senior leaders, middle managers and new entrants to the industry. It explores the importance of supporting diverse talent through the life cycle of their careers, the power of celebrating cultural heritage and amplifying diverse voices.

As we continue to navigate challenging political, social, and economic periods, DEI must remain the foundation of our solutions: embracing diverse perspectives to fuel innovation, reduce inequality, and ensure everyone has a fair chance to succeed.

I look forward to seeing the industry continue to progress on ethnic diversity, and I remain committed to offering thought leadership, practical guidance, and advocacy to help us build workplaces and communities where everyone can thrive.



Priya Aggarwal-Shah
Founder & Director of
PREACH Inclusion®
(Promoting Race,
Ethnicity and Cultural
Heritage)

Language matters: evolving terminology for inclusive practice

Before diving into the guidebook, it's important to reflect on the language we use when discussing race, ethnicity and identity. Many organisations continue to grapple with how best to describe and group individuals from ethnically diverse backgrounds, especially in ways that are accurate, respectful and empowering.

Moving beyond BAME

For many years, the term Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) was widely used to refer to non-White British communities.

However, it has increasingly been recognised as problematic:

- It masks disparities by aggregating data, obscuring the success of some groups and the challenges faced by others.
- It excludes certain communities, such as Gypsy, Roma and Traveller, mixed heritage, and White ethnic minorities, who also experience discrimination.
- It is often used as a proxy for “non-white”, which can be divisive and reductive.

In response to these concerns, the UK Government officially stopped using the term BAME following recommendations from the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities in 2021. Instead, it now encourages the use of specific ethnic group names or the term “ethnic minorities” when grouping is necessary.¹ The Government’s style guide also advises against terms like “non-White” and “Mixed race”, favouring more precise and inclusive phrasing.²

Community perspectives and the shift to REACH

Importantly, many individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds have expressed discomfort with the term BAME. This sentiment was echoed in dozens of workshops hosted by PREACH Inclusion, where participants were asked, “What does race mean to you?” The varied and personal responses helped inspire the rebrand to PREACH Inclusion® – Promoting Race, Ethnicity and Cultural Heritage.³ This new identity reflects PREACH Inclusion’s commitment to intersectional inclusion and is a better reflection of how we often identify ourselves.

Best practice tips

- **Be specific:** Use terms like “Black Caribbean professionals” or “South Asian women in planning” rather than umbrella labels.
- **Explain your terminology:** Include a short note in your communications to clarify your language choices.
- **Avoid ‘non-White’:** It defines people by what they are not, which can feel exclusionary and unhelpful.
- **Be open to constructive challenges:** Be willing to listen, learn and adapt when someone offers feedback on terminology, especially if it comes from those with lived experience.

| Recommended terminology | |
|---|--|
| Term | Why it's used |
| Minoritised ethnic group | This refers to people who have been pushed to the margins of society – not because they are small in number, but because systems and institutions have treated them unfairly or excluded them from power, opportunity and visibility. It's important to understand that being “minoritised” is not about how many people are in a group. It's about how that group is treated. For example, in London, ethnically diverse communities make up nearly half the population. But in many industries, including real estate, they are still underrepresented in leadership roles, decision-making spaces and public narratives. |
| Ethnic minorities | Still used in Government and data contexts; includes White minorities like Irish Traveller and Roma. |
| Racialised communities | “Racialised” refers to the process by which people are categorised and treated differently based on perceived race or ethnicity. |
| People of colour | Still common but increasingly seen as US-centric and potentially problematic due to historical baggage. |
| Global majority | While it highlights that most of the world’s population is non-white, the term can feel abstract or politically charged depending on context. It is often better suited to discussions around geopolitics, global development or economics, and has yet to gain widespread traction within the corporate sector. |
| REACH (Race, Ethnicity and Cultural Heritage) | REACH – Race, Ethnicity and Cultural Heritage – recognises not only race and ethnicity, but also the cultural heritage that shapes individual and collective identity. This broader framing enables more meaningful engagement with diverse histories, traditions and lived experiences. It has been embraced by NHS Trusts, universities and may inclusion networks in the corporate sector, as a more accurate and empowering framework for staff networks and policy development. |

Understanding the problem

London is the most ethnically diverse region in England and Wales. According to the 2021 Census, only 36.8% of Londoners identify as White British, with significant representation across Asian (18.4%), Black (13.5%), Mixed (14.6%), and Other ethnic groups. This diversity is especially pronounced in boroughs like Newham, Brent, and Tower Hamlets, where White British residents make up less than 30% of the population.⁴

Despite London's demographic profile, the property sector remains disproportionately White and middle-class. A 2023 London Property Alliance survey found that 91% of respondents working in property identified as White British.⁵ Ethnic diversity is strongest at graduate level but drops sharply in leadership, with 51% of senior leaders in the sector identifying as White males from higher socio-economic backgrounds (Bridge Group & JLL UK Foundation, 2025).⁶ These gaps highlight the urgent need for inclusive progression pathways and targeted leadership development.

Race, privilege and intersectionality

Much of the conversation around race in the property sector has focused on numbers – how many people from ethnic minority backgrounds are represented and where they're missing. While this data is important, it doesn't always tell us why these gaps exist or what structures continue to reinforce them. To move forward, we need to look beneath the surface.

Why talking about race can feel difficult

Race is often associated with discomfort, linked to histories of injustice, discrimination and exclusion. But it's also tied to privilege: the unearned advantages some individuals hold because of how society perceives their race, class or background.

In the property sector, privilege shows up in many ways:

- Who has access to capital, networks and mentorship.
- Who is invited into leadership conversations.
- Whose voice is heard, and whose is overlooked.

These aren't just personal dynamics – they're shaped by social, economic, political and institutional power.⁷

What is Intersectionality and why does it matter?

The concept of intersectionality, first introduced by Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw, describes how individuals experience discrimination and privilege in overlapping ways. Race is often a foundational lens through which these experiences are shaped – but it rarely exists in isolation.⁸

For example:

- A Black woman from a working-class background may face barriers not only due to her race, but also her gender and socio-economic status.
- A South Asian man may be well represented at entry level but excluded from leadership due to cultural bias or lack of sponsorship.

Intersectionality helps organisations and individuals understand that inclusion is not simply about representation; it's about recognising how systems affect people differently and designing solutions that reflect that complexity.

Although a separate London Property Alliance Intersectionality Guidebook explores this concept in greater depth, it is mentioned here because race often serves as a gateway through which other forms of inequality are experienced and understood. In the property sector, race intersects with class, gender, education and access to networks, all of which shape who enters the industry, who progresses, and who is heard.

Readers who wish to explore intersectionality further – including practical tools, lived experiences, and sector-specific insights – are encouraged to read the dedicated guidebook.

Key challenges in achieving racial equality in real estate



Unconscious bias



Access to opportunity



Recruitment practices



Workplace culture

Opportunities to make change

The business case for creating an ethnically diverse workforce is stronger than ever. McKinsey & Company's *Diversity Matters Even More* report (2023) found that companies in the top quartile for ethnic diversity on executive teams were 39% more likely to outperform their peers in profitability than those in the bottom quartile.⁹

In the UK, the Parker Review: 10 Years On (2025) offers further evidence of progress and impact. It reports that 95% of FTSE 100 companies now have at least one ethnic minority board member, with over half exceeding that benchmark. The review highlights that ethnically diverse boards are better equipped to navigate complex stakeholder environments, respond to global challenges and reflect the communities they serve.¹⁰

1. Promoting opportunities

A persistent barrier to entry for Black and ethnically diverse individuals in the real estate sector is a lack of visibility and understanding of the breadth of roles available. In a WPA NextGen survey with students from the University of Westminster, 91% of the students surveyed knew what an estate agent did, but just a third of students had heard of an asset manager.

In order to make the sector more appealing for a diverse population, real estate companies should engage with students, young people and local communities about the wide range of roles and opportunities available. Organising career open days or offering work experience placements will help promote careers in the built environment to young people. In addition, engaging with parents, who are key influencers in a young person's career choices, would help broaden knowledge about professions within property and real estate. Furthermore, engagement can't be a one-off initiative; having multiple, consistent touchpoints helps to build trust, deepen understanding, and foster long-term relationships that make the sector feel both accessible and welcoming.

Resource: Mastering My Future (MMF) is an employability programme from the Young Westminster Foundation, delivered by 2-3 Degrees. It supports young people aged 14-25 from underrepresented groups and disadvantaged areas of Westminster. Through outreach, mentoring, skills training, and work experience, MMF engages hundreds of young people each year, helping them build confidence, develop employability skills and gain insight into a wide range of career pathways – including the range of opportunities within the built environment. Since 2023, MMF has been supported by WPA and its Board member companies through funding and property-related experiences.

<https://www.youngwestminster.com/mastering-my-future/>

Resource: The Land Collective is an award-winning, not-for-profit organisation working to shape a more equitable and future-ready real estate sector. Its flagship initiative, Black Girls in Property, is a five-day summer programme designed for Year 11 girls of Black heritage living in London. Through skills workshops, site visits and work experience, the programme has supported over 50 participants to explore careers in real estate. Alumni have gone on to study real estate at university and secure roles at firms such as Savills and Montagu Evans. The Land Collective maintains long-term relationships with participants, offering continued guidance and opportunities that turn initial exposure into lasting career pathways. Employers can engage through annual corporate partnerships, which combine outreach, mentoring, and social value delivery with meaningful impact reporting.

<https://thelandcollective.com/>

2. Inclusive recruitment

Innovative recruitment practices can help mitigate both unconscious and conscious bias in hiring. Approaches such as the Rooney Rule – which requires that at least one candidate from an underrepresented background is considered for each role – and blind CV and application filtering (see page 10 and 11) are increasingly used to widen access and challenge default patterns.

Research by the Centre for Social Integration found that applicants from ethnic minority backgrounds must send 60% more applications to receive a positive response compared to white British candidates. This underscores the structural barriers that persist in recruitment and the need for reform.¹¹

To give qualified candidates from diverse and non-traditional backgrounds a fairer chance of success, organisations can:

- Use recruitment firms and platforms that specialise in sourcing diverse talent.
- Advertise roles in publications and websites more widely read by underrepresented groups.
- Set objective criteria for job descriptions and assess candidates based on core competencies rather than “nice to have” extras.

Importantly, inclusive hiring should be paired with internal culture change. Recruitment is only effective when candidates feel safe, valued and supported once inside the organisation.

Salary transparency is another key lever. Including a salary or salary range in job descriptions helps manage expectations and ensures all candidates are offered equitable pay. It also encourages women and racially minoritised candidates, who are statistically less likely to negotiate, to consider asking for higher salaries.¹² In turn, this can help reduce ethnicity pay gaps (see page 14).

Finally, it is vital to recognise that candidates from different backgrounds may not have had access to the same networks, internships or extracurricular experiences. By acknowledging this, organisations can move beyond narrow definitions of merit and embrace the richness of lived experience. These practices reduce the risk that talented individuals will self-select out of opportunities where they don’t see themselves reflected or feel they don’t “fit.”

Resource: Hemisphere is a recruitment tool created by Rare Recruitment that helps interviewers and managers combat bias. The software seeks to highlight bias in the recruitment process and provides practical tips to help interviewers mitigate its effects.

<https://www.raretechnology.com/products/hemisphere>

Case Study: The Rooney Rule

The Rooney Rule, first introduced in the NFL (the US National Football League) in 2003, requires that at least one woman and one candidate from an underrepresented ethnic background be considered on the shortlist for any advertised role. Its aim is to widen the pool of candidates at each stage of the recruitment process and challenge default hiring patterns.

In the UK, the Rooney Rule has gained traction in sectors like housing and football. Housing associations such as One Housing, Peabody and L&Q have adopted the rule for senior roles, often in conjunction with unconscious bias training and inclusive succession planning. For example, One Housing applies the Rooney Rule to all head-of-department roles and above, ensuring that qualified Black, Asian, and minoritised ethnic and/or female candidates are automatically progressed to interview. The National Housing Federation has actively supported this approach, sharing case studies and guidance to help members implement inclusive recruitment practices.¹³

However, the Rooney Rule is not a silver bullet. Its success depends on how it's implemented and whether it's supported by broader cultural and structural change. Without clear criteria, inclusive onboarding and progression pathways, there's a risk of tokenism, where diverse candidates are interviewed but not hired. To be effective, the Rooney Rule should be part of a wider strategy that includes leadership development, objective scoring and a commitment to equity throughout the talent pipeline.

Case study: Blind CVs and application filtering

Blind CVs and application filtering remove personal details such as age, gender, ethnicity and academic background. By stripping away markers that can trigger bias, recruiters are encouraged to evaluate candidates objectively, reducing the influence of stereotypes or “gut feel.” This approach can support ethnic minority candidates by removing early-stage barriers linked to names or backgrounds, ensuring fairer access to opportunities.

However, as with initiatives like the Rooney Rule, blind CVs have limitations. Bias can re-enter during interviews or assessment stages. To be effective, anonymised applications should be combined with inclusive interviewing practices and transparent recruitment processes. Together, these measures can significantly improve equity in hiring.

3. Retention and promotion

Organisations are likely to have a more diverse workforce when their leadership is diverse. Generally, diversity breeds more diversity because such organisations become an attractive place to work. Leadership programmes can provide an alternative platform to develop and support the progression of ethnically diverse colleagues in their career.

Case Study: We Rise In and Montagu Evans – Partnering for inclusive leadership

Founded by Faith Locken MRICS, a Chartered Commercial Surveyor with over a decade of experience in real estate and the built environment, We Rise In (WRI) is an award-winning professional training and development company dedicated to advancing equity and inclusion across corporate industries. Through flagship leadership programmes and reverse mentoring initiatives, WRI empowers diverse talent to progress while helping organisations build more inclusive cultures. Corporate partners include Montagu Evans LLP, JLL and Barclays.

Since its inception, Montagu Evans has partnered closely with WRI, championing inclusion and embedding lived experiences into business culture. The firm has sponsored employees to participate in WRI's Leadership Programme, engaged 21 senior leaders in reverse mentoring and hosted listening exercises for ethnically diverse colleagues. Together, these initiatives have strengthened Montagu Evans' inclusive culture, supported the development of Black and ethnically minoritised talent and deepened organisational understanding of diverse lived experiences.

<https://www.werisein.co.uk/>

Case Study: Advancing the ethnically diverse talent pipeline

Roots Inspire is a leadership development centre with a specific focus on advancing the ethnically diverse talent pipeline. Its work centres on the premise of providing mid-senior talent with access to senior corporate role-models that provide guidance on the unwritten rules of the corporate world. Through a six-month development journey that combines 1:1 career coaching with practice-based sessions on personal branding, sponsor engagement and navigating corporate politics, it provides targeted programmes for both emerging leaders (3-10 years of experience) and emerging executives (less than 10 years of experience). It works across multiple markets with organisations such as CBRE, Google, Rabobank and Freshfields.

With over 250 programme alumni, participants show consistent progress on key drivers of advancement: 89% finish with clarity on their next career step (up from 27%), 86% develop actionable strategies to increase visibility and sponsorship (up from 17%) and near 70% make a career move within twelve months. These shifts illustrate how targeted work on the conditions that shape progression strengthens the talent pipeline in sectors such as the built environment.

“Roots Inspire is an amazing organisation with amazing people that drive the business and the programme. Seeing mentors that look like me and having such a wide variety of mentors available to choose from was a huge advantage.”

– Mike Persaud, Alliance Director, CBRE

<https://rootsinspire.com/>

Ways to support ethnic representation across the sector

4. Ethnicity pay gap: progress and potential

The draft Equality (Race and Disability) Bill is a proposed piece of UK legislation designed to strengthen workplace protections for racially minoritised and disabled people.¹⁴ While not yet enacted, it reflects a growing policy direction: one that expects employers to demonstrate transparency, equity and accountability across recruitment, pay and progression.

The Bill is expected to mandate ethnicity and disability pay gap reporting for organisations with over 250 employees. It would also close legal gaps in the Equality Act 2010 by enshrining equal pay rights for ethnic minority staff and strengthening protections against dual discrimination – where individuals face bias based on two characteristics, such as race and disability. Employers may also be required to review outsourcing practices to ensure pay equity is upheld across all employment models.

Many organisations have already begun reporting ethnicity pay gaps voluntarily. Firms such as PwC, EY and the BBC have used this data to identify barriers to progression, improve transparency and shape more inclusive talent strategies. In the property sector, BNP Paribas Real Estate UK has published combined gender and ethnicity pay gap reports, linking data to action through inclusive recruitment, mentoring and outreach programmes.

While the legislative landscape may evolve, the direction of travel is clear. Employers which embed inclusive pay practices now – through voluntary audits, transparent reporting and targeted development – will be better placed to meet future requirements and lead sector-wide change.

At Board level

- Consider embedding a diversity strategy in the overall business strategy, guiding pay, culture, recruitment and flexible working policies.
- Fund diversity and inclusion training for staff at all levels.
- Sign up to external charters (e.g. Future of London's Speaker Diversity Pledge) to make commitments public and accountable.
- Introduce inclusive recruitment practices (e.g. Rooney Rule) and work with diverse recruitment agencies to advertise roles.
- Commit to ethnicity pay gap reporting (where applicable), with clear data collection processes and transparent communication about findings and actions.
- Model inclusive leadership by actively sponsoring ethnic minority talent and embedding allyship into board culture, moving beyond statements to sustained, accountable action.

At middle management

- Provide safe spaces for discussion and tailored support for ethnically diverse colleagues, including career development programmes.
- Plan inclusive team awaydays and set up a diversity calendar highlighting key cultural and religious events.
- Check in with colleagues from ethnic backgrounds – especially following triggering events or moments of social significance.
- Support mentoring and sponsorship programmes that connect ethnically diverse staff with senior leaders.

At NextGen

- Engage with local schools, community centres and charities to promote real estate careers to diverse young people. Extend outreach to parents where possible.
- Support peer-led initiatives that amplify underrepresented voices and foster inclusive networks e.g., social media campaign or an event.
- If comfortable, share lived experiences and reflections through blogs, panels or internal communications to build empathy and awareness.

Promoting an inclusive workforce

Creating a positive narrative around difference helps develop a workplace culture that is welcoming and inclusive for candidates from underrepresented backgrounds. Initiatives that promote psychological safety, such as confidential adviser schemes or safe space discussions, can support employees in navigating sensitive issues and feeling valued at work. When all staff feel comfortable and supported, organisations are better equipped to thrive.

Case Study: Tackling Racism Taskforce

In the wake of the Black Lives Matter social movement, the City of London Corporation set up The Tackling Racism Taskforce which operated between June 2020 and December 2021. The Taskforce used breakout rooms and other facilitation techniques during sections of each meeting to encourage discussion from all attendees and allow them to feel able to speak freely and openly about sensitive issues in a safe place. The recommendations of the Tackling Racism Taskforce, including establishing City Corporation's Equity, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Sub-Committee (formerly known as Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Sub Committee), have been either completed, subsumed into business-as-usual reporting or incorporated into wider programmes of activity to ensure the City Corporation continues to advance race equality and tackle racism.

Case Study: Conversations About Our Culture Workshops

Law firm Macfarlanes' Conversations About Race (CAR) programme has been a cornerstone of the firm's progress in building a more representative partnership and driving inclusion. The programme explores key topics such as unconscious bias, intersectionality and microaggressions, creating space for open dialogue and reflection.

Building on this foundation, in 2024 the firm launched a series of workshops titled "Conversations About Our Culture." These sessions drew on insights from previous initiatives —including engagement surveys, roundtables and the CAR programme — as part of Macfarlanes' ongoing investment in a positive and supportive working environment.

The workshops were tailored to individual teams, encouraging open conversations across different roles, personality types and generations. After each session, the Director of Diversity and Inclusion sent a targeted follow-up email summarising key topics like inclusive communication, wellbeing and feedback, along with practical steps for building a more inclusive team culture.

Training for transparency

Attendees at our industry roundtable agreed that the responsibility for driving change must be shared across all levels of an organisation. The burden of leading diversity initiatives should not fall solely on underrepresented colleagues. When employees are supported to reflect on their own privilege, they are better able to recognise disparities across the sector and take action.

Larger organisations may wish to appoint a dedicated diversity officer or manager to oversee activity in this space. This role can help streamline efforts, maintain strategic focus and support the delivery of company-wide inclusion programmes and events.

Investment in training focused on racism – particularly unconscious bias, bystander intervention, cultural awareness and microaggressions – should be prioritised and offered to all staff. Such programmes help foster an open and inclusive environment by equipping employees to navigate sensitive conversations with greater confidence and care.

Resource: PREACH Inclusion is a leading training provider in the real estate sector, trusted by major firms to deliver impactful sessions on race, microaggressions and how to confidently intervene in challenging situations. Its programmes support organisations in building inclusive cultures through practical, reflective learning. In addition to formal training, PREACH Inclusion regularly shares guidance on sensitive topics via its social media channels, helping teams stay informed and responsive to emerging DEI challenges. Members also benefit from quarterly roundtable discussions, which provide a space to exchange insights and develop sector-wide solutions.

<https://www.preachinclusion.com/>

Resource: Since 2020, Ashurst's Anti Racism Hub has deepened understanding and allyship across global offices, with engagement showing confidence to call out bias and support colleagues. Ashurst remains committed to a safe, inclusive workplace, preventing discrimination, harassment, hostile conduct and victimisation. Aligned to the FY27 Strategy, compulsory Respect at Work training is now delivered, helping the firm build collaborative cultures and clarify expectations.

Creating space for diverse narratives

Creating space to celebrate cultural heritage and share diverse stories is a powerful way to build belonging in the workplace. When organisations embrace practices from different cultures – whether through cultural and religious festival calendars, storytelling initiatives or book clubs – they signal that all identities are valued. These activities not only spark open discussion among employees but also embed cultural awareness into everyday organisational life.

Case study: South Asian Heritage Month panel

Montagu Evans hosted an event to mark South Asian Heritage Month 2025, centred on the theme “Roots to Routes.” The evening featured artist Nilupa Yasmin, whose work is displayed within Montagu Evans’ offices, sharing how her practice celebrates heritage and identity. The programme continued with a panel discussion chaired by Priya Aggarwal-Shah (PREACH Inclusion), bringing together voices from Allianz, Brookfield Properties and Montagu Evans. The conversation explored representation and leadership as key drivers of belonging and organisational culture.

The event reinforced Montagu Evans’ commitment to embedding cultural awareness into organisational practices, creating meaningful connections and advancing an inclusive culture that extends beyond the workplace.

Case study: Macfarlanes’ Refugee Heritage

Macfarlanes encourages and supports the celebration of different cultural backgrounds through its Race, Ethnicity and Cultural Heritage staff network. Taking a more nuanced and intersectional approach over the past year, employees are encouraged to share stories about their refugee heritage. The firm has a long-standing relationship with Care4Calais and is a founding partner of a new pro bono Refugee Law Clinic (alongside Clifford Chance and the University of London).

Many employees have direct experience of displacement and many more have parents or grandparents who were forced to flee their country to escape war, persecution or natural disaster. The refugee heritage programme promotes internally within Macfarlanes the pro bono work the firm does with refugees, shares personal employee stories and stories of other refugees.

The programme was launched with the Senior Partner of Macfarlanes sharing his family’s experiences and has since seen a range of other employees share details of their refugee heritage. By encouraging employees to talk about their diverse backgrounds, Macfarlanes hopes to create a welcoming culture in which all employees feel they can bring their whole, authentic selves to work. Macfarlanes’ leadership team recognises the importance of sharing these stories to raise awareness of different experiences.

Other firm wide events have included: a talk on Holocaust Memorial Day from the author and artist, Edmund de Waal, and one of the firm’s partners sharing his family’s story escaping the Holocaust; to mark International Women’s Day a panel of female refugees talking about overcoming the challenges of being a refugee; and the firm partnered with the Forced to Flee exhibition at the IWM.

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