

Ripples



21

Giving a voice to everyone

Cynthia Nchang

19

From action to interaction

Tim Leese

13

Connecting with power

Paul Smyth



Magazine
April 2025



Inside Ripples

April 2025

02



04



09



13



Introduction

How to champion inclusion in all we do

David Sanderson

Feature

Investing in experience

Ciara Devlin

Feature

A voice of support

Zulekha Dala

Feature

Connecting with power

Peter Smyth

16



19



21



23



Feature

Spaces to bridge divides

Harriet Vickers

Feature

From action to interaction

Tim Leese

Feature

Giving a voice to everyone

Cynthia Nchang

News

Fellowship News

John Hind

Introduction

Welcome



As David Sanderson prepares to step down as CEO of The Rank Foundation, he reflects on the values that have shaped its journey. In this foreword to Ripples, he highlights the power of strong leaders and the connections at the heart of lasting change.

David Sanderson , CEO, The Rank Foundation

It's time to ask: how can we champion belonging and inclusion in all that we do?

One of my last duties after 23 years with the Rank Foundation is to write the foreword to this edition of Rank Ripples. I do it while also writing a history and reflections covering our collective journey since 2002 (not an easy task given the breadth and scope of our work).

After reading the content of this version of Ripples, the word 'voice' features in many of the articles, along with 'investing in experience' and 'action'. Each speaking to the way we, as a Network, are breaking down barriers and strengthening communities.

I have often talked about leadership; how it connects much of our work, and not least the way it interacts with exciting and growing strands of enterprise and innovation. But culture sits at the very heart of this.

Long before we embedded leadership and enterprise into our

strategy, even before we spoke about relational philanthropy, we focused on people. We backed strong leaders who understood the importance of

Ripples magazine is part of that model. It's about giving a platform to all, regardless of operational focus, organisational size or income. The

66

"We backed strong leaders who understood the importance of turning words into action."

99

turning words into action, giving them the resources and support they needed to strengthen, consolidate, scale and grow.

It was from these simple beginnings, recognising the importance of 'voice' and 'action' that the Rank Network took root. Today the Rank Network is a model for connection—strongly based on trust, positive values and mutual respect—ensuring that no member stands alone.

analogy of the 'ripple' stills holds good, where the desired outcome is greater than the sum of each part. As we enter the next stage of our Network's evolution it's time to ask ourselves: how can we champion belonging and inclusion in all that we do? This isn't just about leadership; it's about our collective ability to turbo charge meaningful, lasting change. ●

Feature

Investing in experience



Ciara Devlin describes how Breaking Barriers works with experts with lived experience to develop effective policies, programmes, and services that are responsive to the refugee community's needs and the challenges they face.

Ciara Devlin, CEO, Breaking Barriers



I first met members of Breaking Barriers' Lived Experience Panel (LEP) in 2023 while going through the CEO role recruitment process. I was so impressed. Here was an organisation that was putting the people it serves at the forefront of its work and decision-making, truly embodying its organisational value of being 'mission led'. Meeting the panel so early on was a really enriching

experience, including those who had personally been supported by Breaking Barriers' services. Members of the LEP are professionals with a wealth of experience across various fields, including research, engineering, management, and law. In addition to their professional expertise, they have personal experience of the UK asylum and refugee system. They are

change-makers who are hired as consultants to improve the way the organisation works and strengthen our workplace community. We use the term lived experience to mean people from a refugee background who have first-hand experience seeking sanctuary or forced migration to the UK. The LEP ensures that Breaking Barriers can develop effective policies, >>



programmes, and services that are responsive to the refugee community's needs and the challenges they face.

Mission led

Refugees have so much to offer businesses—they bring new knowledge, skills, and fresh perspectives that help drive innovation. However, they are four times more likely to be unemployed than people born in the UK. So,

Breaking Barriers' mission is to support refugees into meaningful employment.

We work directly with clients from a refugee background, providing them with advice, education and training to help them navigate the unfamiliar UK job market. We also work with businesses to open job opportunities and build inclusive and equitable recruitment processes and workplaces to break down some of the barriers to employment that

refugees face.

The people we work with are an incredibly diverse group with differing experiences. In 2023-24, we supported 1248 people from 79 countries who spoke more than 100 languages and were aged 18 to 50+. With such a diverse group, each with unique skills, experiences, and support needs, the LEP's input is essential to ensure our services are effective and to strengthen Breaking Barriers' own community. >>



Our Lived Experience Strategy

To practise what we preach, we strive to lower the barriers to employment for refugees within Breaking Barriers. This commitment reinforces our purpose and demonstrates our belief in the value and potential of those we serve.

We provide training and development opportunities for staff with lived experience and mental health support to ensure that they can progress into managerial roles

within the organisation. Our goal is to create pathways into employment and invest in staff with lived experience, supporting their long-term growth and leadership within our team.

To be more effective as a charity, we consult people with lived experience to produce our solutions and strategies. They are uniquely positioned to advise us on how to overcome the challenges they face. This collaborative approach leads to

programmes that more accurately reflect and meet the needs of the communities we support.

Engaging people with lived experience also fosters a culture of continuous learning and innovation. Their contributions help us adapt to evolving challenges and remain responsive to our clients' needs.

The LEP's contribution

The LEP has significantly enriched our staff's knowledge of our clients' >>

unique struggles and perspectives. It has also bolstered our team's confidence when communicating with our partners and stakeholders about the barriers that refugees face. The LEP was established in July 2023 and is active in four of Breaking Barriers' current locations. Crucially, this is a two-way relationship. Breaking Barriers provides the LEP with on-boarding, training, and well-being support so that members can contribute their best. Our LEP Involvement Officer closely supports them and reviews their progress in development sessions and appraisals.

Meanwhile, in the last year alone, the LEP has provided 450 hours of consultancy support, with projects including:

- Strategic corporate partnerships that will increase professional opportunities for refugees.
- Advising on a sector-leading

programme integration with a partner charity

- Creating awareness pieces on topics such as workplace advocacy and supporting colleagues during Ramadan.

- Improving policies and documents and making them accessible and jargon-free.

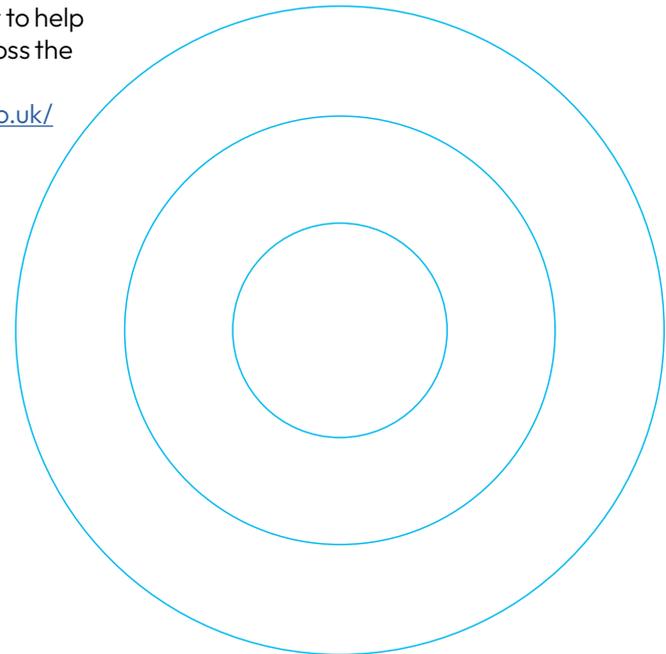
- Co-chairing and participating in significant organisational events, including a Refugee Week webinar for 180 people.

- Inputting into the organisation's updated Theory of Change.

We know from direct experience that people of refugee backgrounds strengthen and enrich our communities. We are excited that our funders and partners also believe in the power of lived experience to benefit businesses and want to help refugees build new lives across the UK. ●

<https://breaking-barriers.co.uk/>

“Refugees have so much to offer businesses—they bring new knowledge, skills, and fresh perspectives that help drive innovation.”



Feature

A voice of support

Zulekha Dala leads a charity that has strengthened local social cohesion for nearly three decades by consistently addressing community needs.

Zulekha Dala, JP, MBE,
Chief Officer, Aawaz



Aawaz is a charity based in Hyndburn, Lancs. It was established as a small community group in 1997 by a group of Muslim women. The aim was to help mothers who did not speak sufficient English and needed language support to access mainstream services. The word Aawaz means “Voice” in Urdu. The group has since become a women’s charity offering multilingual support, personal development, and learning/training opportunities for women from minoritised communities. It is about working with women from a person-centred approach to help the individual contribute to wider society. We do this very practically with our small team of multilingual staff and our wonderful volunteers. Engaging meaningfully with the women helps them to feel comfortable and able to discuss what they wish in a warm, friendly, and welcoming environment. We work holistically and at the grassroots; this means we can engage with individuals often described as disconnected or difficult to reach. We are out there doing outreach, face-to-face work, talking with women and listening to what they have to say. Aawaz is always listening and hearing about the issues that impact the women who access the charity’s support.

From our experience delivering support over the past 28 years, we have learned that the simplest things are the best for helping bring communities together. Be genuine, give your time, be respectful, actively listen, be patient, and be realistic about what we can help to change! Our approach is always about being open and honest, welcoming, helping people feel at ease, and allowing

on to achieve their goals, which can include being more confident, communicating better in the English language, taking up a new hobby, learning a new skill, volunteering, further education, or employment. Multi-faith working is a cross-cutting theme in all our activities because developing a better understanding between cultures is essential. We have found that opening up simple

“From our experience delivering support over the past 28 years, we have learned that the simplest things are the best for helping bring communities together.”

them to ask questions without worrying about offending anyone. It is essential for us that we are here for the women who need our support before and after a project begins. Our door is open! Aawaz has always sought out new opportunities for service users. We have initiated and nurtured connections and built good working relationships that assist everyone in working effectively across cultures. This work creates its own role models: women who approach Aawaz who receive the help and support that enables them to become helpers to others. They go

conversations helps everyone, and there are often more similarities than stark differences.

Voices of Unity

We’re working on a cohesion project, ‘Unity Voices’, owned and steered by a group of women passionate about creating better understanding between cultures. The whole country was shocked by the tragic incident in Southport during the summer of 2024. What was also shocking was the rapid onset of protests and violence towards the Muslim community. At Aawaz, our service users were so anxious and >>



threatened that we had to decide to pause all face-to-face work. In this time of division and fear, many in minoritised communities felt, and still feel, anxious and concerned. Thus, it became even more critical that we continue working to unite communities and people from different cultures and backgrounds, keeping the conversations open and ongoing through informal networks. The Unity Voices project has provided the opportunity to train a group of Cohesion Ambassadors. Another

aspect of the project is creative writing, which led to a female multilingual choir writing their own songs in English, Urdu, Arabic, Gujarati, Farsi and Bengali. Initially, the project planned to arrange visits to different agencies and groups to meet and greet. However, during the steering group sessions, the ladies decided it would be more powerful to go out and speak with ordinary residents, approaching them in a friendly manner and opening up simple

conversations. They talked about general things about their locality and found out the similarities. Some of the feedback from the conversations has included: "It's been good talking to you. I have not had a chat with a woman in a headscarf like yours before; you are alright." "Thanks for talking with us. We learned something today." "I didn't think that Muslim women speak up like you do."

We are planning a Cohesion Morning >>

Feature

Connecting with power

For Paul Smyth, a community can be a diverse group of individuals with common experiences, passions or interests, and he uses this notion to help to connect young people to power in Northern Ireland.



Paul Smyth, Executive Director,
Politics in Action

A community isn't always a place. Sometimes, it is a feeling of togetherness, shared experiences, or shared passions that comes from meeting and engaging with others who feel strongly about the same things you do. Working in Northern Ireland, it is wonderful when that sense of community comes from bringing together diverse young people across our highly segregated society.

Many years ago, I was president of my college Student Union. When we were getting trained for the role (there were a team of us across the University), one piece of advice I remember getting was that 'power doesn't always lie where it is supposed to'. In the decades since the roles I have been given or created for myself have taught me more and more about how our society works (and doesn't work!), for whom, and how many are excluded.

I took up my current role with Politics in Action in mid-2022. I quickly learned how important The Rank Foundation had been in founding our organisation and supporting our founder, Peter Weil, who some of you will know. I was the first staff member and set about building an organisation and growing a team.

Our work in Northern Ireland helps to connect young people to power. We

still have a very segregated education system. We work in clusters of local schools to bring young people from different backgrounds together to work on issues of shared concern and to bring these issues to politicians at the Northern Ireland Assembly and elsewhere. It is excellent work to be doing – seeing young people connect despite their differences and watching how hard they work to present their ideas and convince others of the need for change.

Some issues come up repeatedly in our work – youth mental health, relationships and sex education, and concerns about the climate crisis – and we have been working to support young people in working on these issues over the long term. Another problem is that young people feel they aren't being heard. You may know that Northern Ireland has only had two years of functioning government in the last eight years – and we are only one year into the current government. Combined with the wider political crisis around the world, young people's faith in politics and political institutions here is at an all-time low.

Votes At 16

In 2023, together with young people, we decided that our first major campaign would be for Votes at 16. Young people in Scotland have

enjoyed this right in the local and Scottish Parliament since 2014 and in Wales since 2020. Northern Ireland was the first devolved nation to vote in favour of votes at 16 in 2012, but the issue never progressed. We thought it was time to move the issue forward, so we recruited a team of young people across Northern Ireland to build a campaign. You can see some of them pictured on Page 15. They are aged from 13 to 18 and from various backgrounds.

Our campaign was slowly building momentum when it got an unexpected boost when the Labour Party committed to introducing votes at 16 in their election manifesto. This means that all 16- and 17-year-olds across the UK will be able to vote in all elections and referenda. What is rewarding is seeing how working on this issue is developing the skills and confidence of the young people involved.

For example, one participant, Eva is really shy. We had a launch event for the campaign in Belfast in September, and the local BBC radio station asked if I could come in for an interview with one of the young people the day before. Eva volunteered. I was worried about how she would cope, but she was brilliant – clear and articulate. Eva revealed it was her first radio interview on the way out of the studio! >>



The next day, she did her first television interview. A couple of weeks later, the Northern Ireland Assembly debated votes at 16 again – as a direct result of our campaign – and Eva came with us to listen to the debate. She told me it was her first time at Stormont (the Northern Ireland Assembly building). So many firsts in such a short space of time.

One story among many. Hopefully, the legislation will move through Parliament this summer. It will be in place for the 2027 local Council and Northern Ireland Assembly elections in May that year. Much work must be done to ensure that happens and that our schools are ready to prepare young voters. Working with this incredible team of

young people is wonderful, and seeing their excitement build and confidence grow. It is also essential to work on an issue where young people feel they are winning the argument and where their work will make a lasting difference. ●

<https://www.politicsinaction.org/>

Feature

Spaces to bridge divides

Harriet Vickers, a conflict resolution specialist, bridges divides by creating spaces where people from different backgrounds can meet to talk and build something together.

Harriet Vickers, Peace Collective



Communities are constantly evolving, shaped by shifting demographics, economic changes, and social dynamics. These transformations bring vibrancy and opportunity but can also create uncertainty and tension. Diversity strengthens society, yet without meaningful engagement, it can lead to division and mistrust. When people feel disconnected from the places they call home, whether due to shifting identities, power dynamics, or unequal access to resources, frustrations grow. My work in dialogue and conflict resolution focuses on bridging these divides by creating spaces where people from different backgrounds can meet, talk, and build something together. Over the past decade, I've seen that when people engage meaningfully, they can move beyond fear and suspicion toward understanding and shared purpose.

Change is inevitable

The challenge is ensuring that change strengthens communities rather than divides them. Cohesion requires more than symbolic gestures; it demands long-term engagement, shared spaces, and removing barriers to participation. While one-off events may create a positive moment, lasting trust is built through relationships embedded in everyday life. Regular interaction between people

from different backgrounds, whether in workplaces, schools, or community projects, reduces mistrust and fosters cooperation. Structured engagement dismantles stereotypes and builds social trust, particularly when it takes place under conditions of equality, shared goals, and institutional support.

What works: Shared experiences and structured dialogue
Some of the most effective cohesion efforts happen through shared experiences. In a youth leadership programme I facilitated, young people from different countries explored identity, conflict resolution, and leadership. Through dialogue and engagement, they developed socio-emotional skills and gained new perspectives, shaping how they navigated division back home. These experiences strengthened leadership and resilience by recognising and supporting existing community capacities.

Dialogue and storytelling are also powerful mechanisms for fostering understanding. Through structured conversations between individuals with opposing ideologies, I have seen how difficult but necessary discussions break down prejudices and foster trust. Meaningful engagement must go beyond superficial contact; genuine relationships form when people share experiences in a supportive

setting. However, for dialogue to be truly transformative, it must be paired with broader structural support, including policy shifts, community investment, and long-term engagement.

A city-wide dialogue on radicalisation in 2015 exemplified this approach. Rather than enforcing a top-down security agenda, this initiative created space for open discussions on extremism, social cohesion, and policy, engaging a range of stakeholders, including civil society leaders, local government, and residents. It addressed the broader social and political tensions that fuel division, reinforcing that meaningful engagement, not securitisation, is key to building resilience and preventing division. Strong partnerships between local government, businesses, and community organisations ensure cohesion efforts extend beyond short-term interventions. When used responsibly, digital platforms also enhance engagement, allowing for continued dialogue and the amplification of diverse voices. I've seen these approaches succeed when embedded into daily life, ensuring relationships are nurtured over time rather than through one-off initiatives.

Cohesion requires effort from all parts of society rather than placing the responsibility solely on new or >>

marginalised communities. It is most effective when all groups actively participate rather than expecting one group to assimilate to another. The most effective dialogues I have seen have led to stronger local partnerships, where community organisations and public services collaborate to address shared challenges. They have resulted in community-led initiatives, from neighbourhood safety projects to youth programmes, providing opportunities for meaningful engagement. In some cases, structured conversations have influenced local policy, ensuring under-represented voices shape decision-making processes. Most importantly, I have seen conversations transform relationships, turning mistrust into collaboration and creating networks of support that endure beyond the initial exchange.

Tackling systemic barriers to lasting cohesion

However, dialogue and cohesion efforts cannot serve as quick fixes while deeper issues, such as economic disparities and exclusion, remain unchallenged. Policies must promote fair access to jobs, housing,

and public services, ensuring that economic and social inequalities do not prevent participation in community life. Bringing diverse communities together is vital, but cohesion remains

fragile if structural inequalities that drive division are ignored. Without addressing these barriers, dialogue alone cannot create lasting change. Sustained investment in cohesion is essential for long-term impact. The Rank Foundation exemplifies this by prioritising leadership development, place-based initiatives, and funding structures that allow for meaningful engagement over time. These approaches help build social cohesion in a way that strengthens communities across generations rather than just in moments of crisis. The most successful cohesion initiatives recognise that communities are not static; they evolve in response to shifting social, political, and economic forces. Cohesion and

dialogue are not fixed states but evolving processes that require ongoing investment, adaptability, and trust-building. As global, national, and local challenges shift, these efforts need gentle but

“ Cohesion requires effort from all parts of society rather than placing the responsibility solely on new or marginalised communities.”

constant encouragement. Last summer’s riots across the UK were a stark reminder of what happens when deep-rooted tensions go unaddressed. While often framed as isolated incidents, they reflected broader societal fractures, economic hardship, institutional distrust, and the absence of spaces for honest conversation. They also exposed the persistent impact of racism and inequality, reinforcing the need for intentional efforts to challenge discrimination and create truly inclusive communities. Without addressing these underlying injustices, tensions will continue to surface, deepening division rather than fostering cohesion. ●

Feature

From action to interaction

Tim Leese explains how Welcome Churches recruitment and training policies support mutual learning, helping migrant staff understand the British workplace while enriching the organisation with their perspectives.



Tim Leese, Chief Operating Officer,
Welcome Churches

At Welcome Churches, we are proud of the breadth of experience within our team. Over the years, we have welcomed many staff, interns and trustees from diverse migration backgrounds, including those with direct refugee experience. As an organisation dedicated to helping refugees and people seeking asylum integrate into local churches and communities, we want to build a team of exceptional people who are all in their roles because of their merits. Here are some of the ways that we are learning to rethink how we choose, develop and learn from our staff:

Working across cultures

Some of our recruitment practices risked overlooking exceptional talent, particularly for those from diverse cultural and migration backgrounds. Providing interview questions in advance can help level the playing field and allow all candidates to showcase their skills and experience more effectively. Once recruited, employees may need more help understanding the British workplace context, such as structuring a typical working day, using leave allowances, or planning time off. We have noticed that while employees from British backgrounds are more likely to plan and book holidays in advance, those from other cultures may book holidays and time

off more spontaneously. For some team members, privacy and security concerns mean they cannot publicly share their names or photos. Some use pseudonyms, opt out of having their photos on the website, or prefer to turn their cameras off in specific external meetings. We address this early in the on-boarding process, ensuring a clear agreement on what each individual is comfortable with. Cultural differences also influence how people engage in discussions. In some cultures, participants may only contribute their thoughts and ideas when asked, and some are more comfortable with silence in a meeting than others. We have learned to adapt as a team, creating space for diverse communication styles and fostering a strong sense of belonging—especially for those far from their families and usual support networks.

Look after people

People with experience of forced migration will have different challenges to be aware of in day-to-day life. They will likely have a smaller support network to draw on outside of work. They may have a high level of responsibility for the well-being of other family or community members. Events back in their home country can impact their well-being, and at times extra support may be needed to process

difficult events in the past. Personal stories can inspire and encourage but can also trigger painful memories for others. We celebrate the resilience and triumphs of those we work with. Yet, we remain mindful that storytelling should be sensitive to the audience we are speaking to. Our goal is not just to share experiences but to build a deeper connection and understanding of one another.

Look beyond the labels

Recently, our team reflected on how we describe our experiences in ways that both honour our expertise and uphold the dignity of our colleagues. One conclusion that we came to is that past experiences of migration shape who we are, but they do not define us entirely. Identity is also about where we live now, our work, the communities we engage with, the interests we pursue... and so much more!

Identifying and working with people from diverse migration backgrounds takes time to learn, and requires changes to how the team is recruited, trained and run. Yet the experience they bring takes us beyond a list of nations and backgrounds to a resilient and adaptable team while building on the experience and maturity of those who have experienced migration. ●

<https://welcomechurches.org/>

Feature

Giving a voice to everyone

Cynthia Nchang shares Integrate UK's optimism that despite recent racism and far-right riots, minorities have always united to resist and ensure history doesn't repeat itself.

Cynthia Nchang, Marketing and Communications Coordinator, Integrate UK





As a black Cameroonian woman in England, I feel like minorities have always found ways to bounce back from adversity. Despite the progress we've made, there are still occurrences when it feels like we're taking significant steps backwards in achieving racial cohesion in our society. Displacement is an issue we all face. During lockdown, I was privileged to facilitate a project with the young people of Integrate UK, which

highlighted the feelings of not belonging in the UK and not having a connection to their home of origin. The Colston statue being toppled, during an anti-racism protest in Bristol in 2020, showed a sign of hope for the future. Still, on the other hand, they questioned why we had to take such drastic measures for changes to be made. They spoke about how seeing racial struggles like the Black Lives Matter protests in the wake of George Floyd's death made them feel. They

wrote a beautiful song, 'Earned a Seat,' expressing their views on the topic and the importance of 'building their own table' to get a seat. During the summer of 2024, many cities in the UK saw weeks of far-right anti-immigration riots. It was disheartening to see people's willingness to terrorise communities they had lived in and come to know. We went from being neighbours to fearing harm being brought upon ourselves by our neighbours, who go to school with our children and go to >>

the same local shop. I wonder how you can go from living side by side to organising hatred towards your neighbour.

As someone living within a diverse community in Bristol, I noticed the fear forced into our communities. People called others, shared information, and warned each other about what days not to go out in case of harm. Everyone was constantly anxious; I remember looking at the news, hoping it wasn't someone I knew being attacked this time. I was in disbelief that this was happening. Overall, the message was loud and clear: we were not welcome. Despite already feeling unwelcome - due to daily microaggressions such as supposedly harmless questions like,

“Where are you really from?” after telling someone you are British - these riots emphasised that when it comes down to it, we will never be seen as British, despite some of us being born here or having lived here for years.

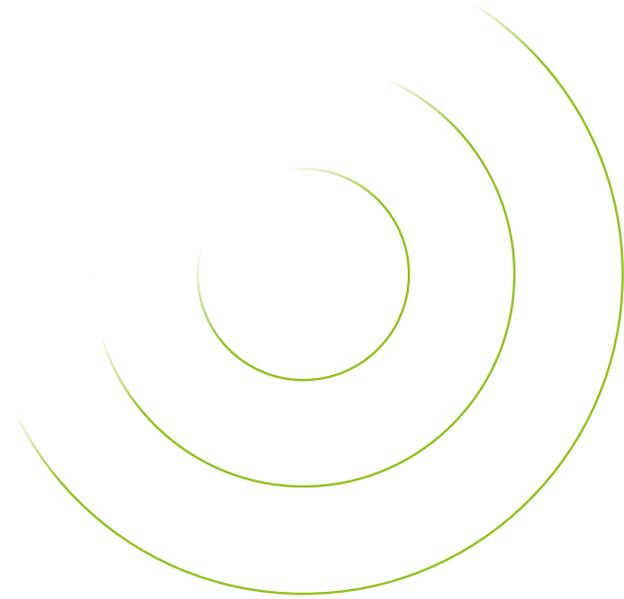
How did people bounce back?

We could argue that history keeps repeating itself, and we constantly take thousands of steps back and experience exclusion that builds a house of doubt in the minds of young immigrants and refugees. But the truth is throughout all these adversities we have always managed to find an army of people who band together and create a loud voice of social justice that drowns out that voice of doubt.

Young people who stand proud of who they are can show you ways to overcome adversity. Charities like Integrate give young people from minority backgrounds a space to come together, speak about what affects them in their community, and create opportunities to meet people from a range of backgrounds and learn from others about ethnicities, religions, and cultures. Their activism builds unity and cohesion.

It is important for people of all races, ages, and genders to stand with us, proving that no matter how loud the hate and exclusion can be, more people want to make sure history doesn't repeat itself and we don't stand alone. ●

<https://integrateuk.org/>



News

Fellowship News

John Hind, Director of Education and Leadership The Rank Foundation



An update on the development and activities of the Rank Fellowship.

All those years of teaching history have prompted something of a Pavlovian response in me such that when I hear the word ‘change’ in any discussion, my first thought is to pair it with continuity – something that’s clearly evident within the Fellowship. The School Leadership Award – previous holders of which account for the majority of Fellows – is the oldest of The Rank Foundation’s programmes, dating back to 1978 – and the Fellowship itself is now in its 22nd year. Each has seen incremental change. The Award saw its first student from outside the independent sector in 2008 (this year’s list of

participating schools sees an almost equal balance between state and independent schools) while the Fellowship is now delighted to welcome former Time to Shine leaders. Such change is vital: continuity has its merits, but unchallenged can fall into atrophy. With that in mind, the Fellows’ Leadership Team commissioned Siobhan Edwards to help them work towards a Theory of Change, which will allow the team to focus on the changes it wishes to see in its three areas of work – building the Fellowship community, supporting Fellows and – perhaps most importantly – inspiring Fellows to

make a positive impact on society, specifically by fostering links with the rest of the Foundation and its Network. We are excited by the possibilities Siobhan’s guidance will offer and will report back on the outcomes.

Change is also evident in Rosalie Kerr’s appointment as our first Alumni Development Officer. This is a vital appointment as we focus on our wider purpose with Siobhan. Rosalie – who has made an excellent start to her work with us – reflects on her time with Rank so far on the opposite page.

Leadership events Page 26 >>

Building Connections: Strengthening the Rank Fellowship Community

I recently joined The Rank Foundation as the Alumni Development Officer, having graduated from the University of Leeds with a degree in International History and Politics. It's been an exciting start to my time here, and I already feel immersed in Rank's mission and the Fellowship community. My role is part of the Time to Shine (T2S) programme, an initiative that tackles the uncertainty many young people face when transitioning into the workforce. The programme doesn't just offer a job—it provides structured training, career development, and a genuine stepping stone into the third sector. With this in mind, I feel incredibly fortunate to have this opportunity and I'm eager to make an impact. As Alumni Development Officer, my role focuses on strengthening engagement within the Fellowship, fostering meaningful connections, and ensuring that past and present Fellows continue to benefit from Rank's Network. This comes at a pivotal time as the Fellowship undergoes a Theory of Change, led by Siobhan Edwards, to refine how it achieves its core aims of inspiration, support, and community. Having the chance to work alongside experienced



Rosalie Kerr - new appointment

professionals like Siobhan, who has been part of Rank for over a decade, is something I truly value. The Fellowship is a diverse and dynamic community, bringing together individuals from different backgrounds, industries, and life paths, yet all united by a shared commitment to giving back. What has struck me most is how, even years after their initial involvement, Fellows remain eager to support, mentor, and collaborate with one another—whether through events, digital engagement, or professional mentoring schemes. My aim is to build on this, ensuring that Fellows

not only stay connected but also gain real value from their ongoing relationship with Rank. In my first couple of months, I've been working on updating and refining the Fellowship database to create a strong foundation for engagement. I've also been connecting with alumni development officers from other charities, gaining insight into how they manage and sustain their alumni networks. This has been a fascinating process and aligns perfectly with Rank's ethos of learning from and strengthening our wider network. Seeing how other organisations maintain meaningful relationships with their alumni has given me plenty of ideas for how we can further enhance our own approach. Looking ahead, I'm excited to continue building connections within the Fellowship and learning more about The Rank Foundation's rich history and evolving community. A highlight on the horizon is the Annual Conference in October, a fantastic opportunity to witness first-hand how our network has grown and changed over the past year. With so much happening across the Fellowship, I'm looking forward to playing my part in its continued success. ●

School Leadership Event

We're also aware that change in the future lies in the hands of young people. With that in mind, the work of our award holders in their September Leadership Event (pictured right) gave us interesting insights into what they perceived to be the challenges facing their generation. Assisted by a first-rate team from CTVC 50 students worked to produce short videos tackling those key themes. It is, perhaps, an interesting reflection on the modern world that several of their videos focused on social isolation, mental health and the pernicious impact of social media. There was also space for investigations of racism, sectarianism and gang violence – the latter especially poignant in light of one of the contributors having lost a friend to a stabbing. Given the fact that half of the cohort (the class of 2024) were complete strangers in their first encounter with Rank and that the time available to produce the videos was very limited, the outcomes were most impressive – thoughtful and well-produced. In reality we had limited the time by including a session on value-led leadership on the first evening of the event, however, the excellent presentation by the team from Clore Social Leadership left us all reflecting on the principles that should lie behind any plans for change.



Mentoring Update

The community and support strands of the Fellowship's mission come together in our mentoring programme. Now in its second year we are focusing on the class of 2017 and are delighted by the willingness of older Fellows to support our programme – the thoughts of a first pilot mentor summarising the approach of all who have supported both cohorts to date: Happy to help give back to something that has helped me so much to get to where I am today.

Learning through Leadership

Finally, with a nod to continuity, we enjoyed our latest in our series of Learning through Leadership talks in November when Dr Sonji Clark (Class of 1982) spoke on 'Courage with Compassion: Leading in Today's NHS'. Sonji is a consultant obstetrician and deputy head of the London School of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, and an honorary senior lecturer at King's College London. She has been a consultant for more than 10 years with special interests in perinatal mental health, substance misuse, and women who are >>

pregnant with other complex social factors.

Fellowship chair, Louisa Searle, summarises well both the evening and the wider impact of Sonji's thoughts.

Sonji's talk was entitled 'Compassionate Leadership' (pictured right), but covered so much more ground than that. She shared personal stories from her childhood and youth and described how that has shaped the person and leader she has become today.

It was particularly clear that the impact of her teachers – and of the Rank Leadership Award – had been immense and had truly changed her life. She reflected, often, on how privileged she felt to receive the Award in a way that was deeply moving.

Sonji's candour and openness allowed us as the audience to see how her challenges and even her 'failures' had been part of her journey, and she encouraged us all to view such set-backs in a similar way.

She also shared the framework she uses to form her 'compassionate leadership', and explored how integrity, authenticity, humility and empathy have guided her through challenging moments in her career. As is true for all of us, those challenges are sometimes posed from the work we do, from those around us and even sometimes from within ourselves.



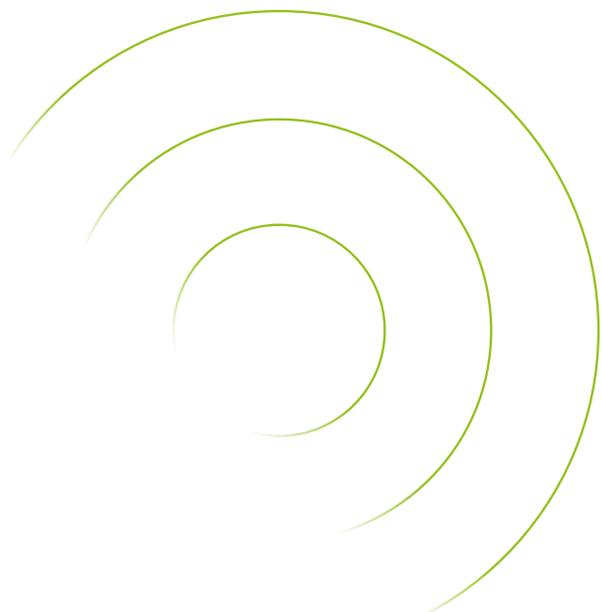
Sonji explained how she navigated all of them – from delivering babies in distress or accusations from colleagues, to racism and imposter syndrome – while always remaining true to herself and her values.

It was fascinating to hear how leadership looks and feels for a leader who has followed a vocation like medicine, particularly in the NHS and in women's health.

In the questions from the audience that followed the speech (and we had many!) Sonji shared with us the advice she would have given her younger self: 'don't limit yourself – never hold

yourself back'.

Huge thanks to Sonji for the generosity she showed us by sharing so much of herself and her journey with the audience – we will be thinking about it for a long time to come. ●





Ripples



The Rank Foundation works in communities across the UK to encourage leaders, develop entrepreneurial mindsets and form strong Networks that improve life.

Founded in 1953 by the flour miller and film maker Arthur Rank, the Foundation is built on his Christian faith, enterprising spirit and commitment to community. During his lifetime, Arthur spotted opportunities to innovate, growing a multi-million pound empire. He remained committed to helping and encouraging others, describing young people as “the seed corn of the future and the leaders of tomorrow”.

Today, the Rank Foundation continues to support the leaders of tomorrow and encourage enterprise for social good.

Our grant programmes focus on:

- Leadership – nurturing purposeful, confident and inspiring leaders who drive positive change.
- Enterprise – developing resilient, impactful organisations that contribute positively to the people and places they serve.
- Community – building on and investing in a community’s strengths.
- Faith – engaging in respectful conversations about faith in all its forms.

At the heart of the Foundation, is our supportive Network of over 1,500 leaders working in communities across the UK. Together, they learn, share and connect to tackle society’s challenges. We build deep and lasting relationships of support with our Network, going beyond traditional funding to philanthropy based on mutual respect, trust and empathy.

Our thriving Network leads positive change to improve life in the communities they cherish.

The Rank Foundation
21 Garden Walk, London, EC2A 3EQ
Charity Number 276976