DRINKS =
UNITED

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United

Creating a **united UK drinks industry**, where everyone feels **safe, included, and supported**.

Information Pack

2024 - 2025

About Drinks United

Drinks United is a cross-industry collaboration founded by The WSTA, The WSET and The Drinks Trust.

Our vision is a united UK drinks industry, where everyone feels safe, included, and supported.

Our mission is to drive coordinated DEI action across the UK drinks industry to create a culture that reflects and supports its people.

We work to support a UK drinks industry that is:

- Safe: Establish a culture of safety and harassment prevention
- Supported: Provide and promote accessible DEI resources
- Inclusive: Increase representation and foster inclusivity
- United: Drive industry-led change through collective leadership

We need your support in setting a new standard for our industry

"There is an opportunity for the drinks industry to be the most attractive, inclusive and diverse of sectors. A place for talented people to thrive"

Miles Beale, CEO, WSTA

The Challenge

The drinks industry faces interconnected challenges that impact people and culture.
From unsafe workplaces to fragmented structures, these issues need urgent, collective action.

Safe
70%

Too Many Workplaces Are Unsafe.
- 37% of women in wine report harassment (1) and over 70% in the whisky industry experienced sexual harassment while at work (2).
- The alcohol-centric nature of the industry is a key risk factor, with increased consumption in the workplace linked to a higher risk of harassment, particularly affecting women (3,4).
- Many organisations lack safeguarding policies or clear reporting mechanisms, leaving employees unprotected.

Supported
60%

Smaller Businesses Are Falling Behind.
- 60% of SMEs lack dedicated HR support, making it difficult to implement DEI practices effectively (5).
- The fragmented structure of the industry results in inconsistent policies and culture, widening the gap in inclusivity.
- Smaller businesses, freelancers, and agency workers need affordable, accessible resources.

Inclusive
9%

Diversity Ends Before Leadership.
- Only 25.8% of leadership roles in hospitality are held by women (6).
- Ethnic minorities make up just 9% of the workforce, compared to 14% nationally (7).
- Barriers to progression, including limited mentorship and representation restrict diverse talent from thriving in leadership.

United
78%

Leadership Can Drive Transformational Change
- 78% of employees believe leadership lacks accountability for addressing inequities (8).
- Organisations with aligned, united leadership teams are 36% more likely to outperform competitors (9).
- Embedding DEI at the leadership level is critical for driving culture change and setting consistent standards across the sector.

The Impact

People and culture issues have an impact on the industry. From high turnover, to skills shortages, to reputational risks, investing in DEI can address these challenges.

The Financial Cost of Workplace Misconduct

- Discrimination payouts can exceed £225k (10), and a drinks firm paid £51k in a recent harassment case (11).
- The Worker Protection Act could increase pay outs by 25% (12).

Safeguarding policies and a culture of accountability protect employees and reduce financial risks.

Rising Stress and Mental Health Challenges

- **40%** of drinks industry employees report high stress, with insufficient employer support cited as a major factor (13).
- Stress and burnout lead to absenteeism and reduced productivity.

Supportive and inclusive cultures reduce stress, improve well-being, and foster engagement.
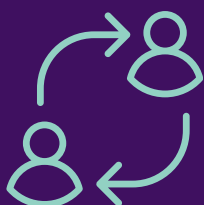
Staff Turnover is 1.5x the National Average

- The drinks industry experiences a turnover rate of **52%**, which is 1.5 times the UK average of 34% (14).
- High turnover is linked to workplace culture and a lack of inclusivity.

Inclusive workplaces foster employee retention, creating environments where talent feels valued and supported.

An Industry Struggling to Attract Talent

- The industry faces a worker shortage of 35.5%, the highest among UK industries (15).
- Poor perceptions of career progression and work-life balance deter talent (16,17).

Investing in DEI can transform the industry, making it a destination for diverse, top-tier talent.

Drinks United is addressing these challenges through strategic DEI initiatives—partner with us to drive change.

The Opportunity

DEI is good for business. Across industries, data shows the benefits of embedding a culture of safety, inclusion, and support - from unlocking talent, to driving innovation, to a better bottom line. Investing in DEI is essential for business performance and sustainable growth.

1 Attract and Retain Talent

- Inclusive cultures attract a diverse talent pool, helping overcome talent shortages.
- A high sense of belonging reduces turnover risk by 50% (19), and 80% of job seekers prioritise inclusion in an employer (18).

2 Enhance Consumer Trust

- Aligning with consumer values builds loyalty and protects brand reputation.
- 53% of consumers seek information on drinks brands' social responsibility and DEI efforts (20).

3 Boost Innovation

- Inclusive companies are 1.7x more likely to be innovation leaders (21), and diverse teams are 70% more likely to capture new markets (22).
- Diverse teams understand varied customer needs, driving innovation and growth.

4 Improve Performance

- Companies in the top quartile for ethnic and cultural diversity on executive teams are 36% more profitable than those in the bottom quartile (9).
- The extensive benefits of DEI drive stronger business performance and long-term success.

The Right Thing to Do

Beyond business performance, we believe that everyone has a right to feel safe, valued, and empowered to succeed at work. By investing in DEI, organisations create workplaces that promote positive cultures, support individual growth, and enable fulfilling careers. **It's time for the drinks industry to lead by example, setting new standards where safety, support, and inclusion are the norm.**

Our Approach

Our approach centres on driving coordinated action, because we achieve more working together. We work through partnership and collaboration, support data-driven insights and action, engage leaders across the industry, and provide resources that are accessible to all.

Now

- Deliver an open-source resource of safeguarding best practice materials which is accessible to all.
- Launch an online resource hub signposting DEI tools and programs for individuals and businesses of all sizes.
- Roll out an industry survey to establish a baseline of workplace culture and DEI concerns.

Next

- Partner on pilot programs aimed at improving representation and fostering inclusivity, with a focus on mentorship and leadership development.
- Grow leadership commitment and accountability, through tools such as DEI scorecards, to encourage leadership engagement and industry-led change.

Later

- Develop a dynamic process for regular hub updates, incorporating industry-wide contributions and addressing evolving DEI concerns.
- Publish an industry culture report summarising survey findings, progress in DEI initiatives, and recommendations for continuous improvement.

Coordinated Action Across the Industry

In May 2024, Drinks United hosted an Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Seminar at the London Wine Fair. The seminar featured industry experts discussing safeguarding and equity challenges within the drinks industry. This event served as a platform for sharing best practices, raising awareness, and building engagement and momentum for industry-wide DEI initiatives. Its success underscores Drinks United's role in leading these critical conversations and fostering a more inclusive environment.

From left: Lorraine Copes (CEO, Be Inclusive Hospitality), Sofia Gassne (Head of HR, Hawksmoor), Gary Keller (Founder, Keller's Cellar), Queena Wong (Founder, Curious Vines).

Who We Are

The Drinks United Board

Michelle Brampton
CEO, WSET

Lulie Halstead
Founder, Wine Intelligence
Trustee, WSET

Miles Beale
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Caroline Thompson-Hill
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Founder, Club Soda
Trustee, The Drinks Trust

Laura Aiken
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Nicky Forrest
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Our Advisory Council

- Ahsoka Wallace, Layton Calling
- Aidy Smith, 3 Drinkers
- Alexandra Hale, Armit Wines
- Alice Basson, Bordeaux Index
- Alya Lilani, Culture Engagment Consultant
- Anjali Douglas, WSET
- Becky Paskin, Our Whisky Foundation
- Charlotte Barker, Diageo
- David Shearsby, Hallgarten & Novum
- Emma Hodges, Accessibility and Inclusion Consultant

- Gary Keller, Keller's Cellar
- James Simpson, Pol Roger
- Jo Ahearne, Buyer, Boutinot
- Lorraine Copes, Be Inclusive Hospitality
- Paddy Gardiner, Côte
- Queena Wong, Curious Vines
- Rosie Kennedy, Liberty Wines
- Shivani Tomar, Decanter
- Thanuja Williams, Brewgooder
- Trina Plamandon, Carpa Vino
- Valeria Granara, Nyetimber
- Vicky Ilankovan, Equal Measure

How to Support

We need your help in setting a new standard for our industry.

Drinks United is uniquely equipped to lead the drinks industry in embedding DEI at every level. By supporting us, companies can set a new standard for workplace culture, strengthen their businesses, and secure the industry's future competitiveness. Through partnership and shared commitment, the UK drinks sector can become a leader in workplace equity and inclusion.

Follow, like and share on LinkedIn.

Talk about us with people in the industry.

Support us with a donation.

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