



ICR Annual Equality Report 2026

Contents

Executive summary	3
1. Introduction.....	5
2. Athena Swan	5
3. Gender equality	5
4. Race and ethnicity equality.....	8
5. Disability equality	9
6. Equality networks	9
7. Training and career development.....	11
8. ICR-wide culture work	11
9. Strengthening career pathways for technicians	12
10. Update on outstanding 2024 equality objectives.....	13
11. The Single EDI Action Plan and future equality objectives	14

Executive summary

The ICR Annual Equality Report 2026 summarises progress made during 2024/25 in advancing equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), alongside analysis of workforce and student equality data. EDI is embedded within the ICR's values, governance and People Strategy, supported by senior leadership, equality champions and has oversight from the Equality Steering Group (chaired by our HR Director Tim Mitchell and Group Leader Professor Amy Berrington) in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty. EDI is also a strand of the ICR's Sustainability Action Plan, which sets out the ICR's plans to implement the UN Sustainability goals.

The ICR has senior equality champions, working to ensure that the groups they champion have their voices heard.

These are:

- Dr Barbara Pittam, Chief Research and Academic Officer – Executive Sponsor for EDI
- Tim Mitchell, HR Director – Professional Services EDI champion
- Professor Chris Bakal – Student EDI champion
- Professor Anguraj Sadanandam – Faculty EDI champion

The ICR remains a globally diverse organisation, with 74 nationalities represented across staff and students. Workforce data shows a broadly stable profile. Women comprise 61.0 per cent of staff and 64.7 per cent of postgraduate research students, while 29.7 per cent of staff identify as from ethnic minority backgrounds, reflecting continued growth, particularly among Asian staff. Disability disclosure has increased to 5.9 per cent, indicating improved confidence in declaring a disability, though this remains below national benchmarks.

Data highlights some ongoing inequalities. Women remain a lower proportion in the highest-paid roles. There has been a reduction in the mean gender pay gap to 18.5 per cent, or 14.1 per cent excluding Clinical Consultants, but we recognise the need for sustained, targeted action.

During the year, we focused our activity on gender equality, race equality, disability inclusion and inclusive culture. The ICR's Athena Swan Silver Award was successfully renewed in 2025, recognising progress in supporting women in research. We are a Disability Committed employer and are striving for Disability Confident Status. Leadership and career development programmes, including Aurora, Accelerate and IMPACT, continued to support women and ethnic minority staff, alongside new appraisal and reward processes to improve transparency and

fairness. Flexible working, parental support initiatives and mandatory training on preventing sexual harassment strengthened support for work-life balance and safe workplaces.

Equality networks remain central to the ICR's inclusive culture, supporting consultation, awareness raising and lived experience insight across a wide range of communities. ICR-wide initiatives, including Report + Support and active bystander training, continue to strengthen accountability and trust.

The Wellcome-funded programme to strengthen career pathways for technicians has delivered significant impact and national recognition and will be embedded into core business operations. Looking ahead, delivery will be driven through a single integrated EDI Action Plan, with priorities including reducing gender and ethnicity pay gaps, increasing representation in the highest-paid roles, improving progression and retention outcomes, and strengthening data quality to support evidence-based decision-making.

1. Introduction

The following provides a summary of key EDI data and actions. A full breakdown of the ICR's equality data is provided in the accompanying Annual Equality Data Report.

2. Athena Swan

The Athena Swan Steering Group has worked to progress gender equality in research and research-related careers. The ICR is proud to have received a silver award renewal in June 2025, given in recognition of the impact of our work to support women in research and to create a culture where everyone can thrive.

We are now combining our Athena Swan work into a single EDI Action Plan and EDI Strategy. Progress towards our equality goals will be supported through a new joint Equality Steering Group, which combines both the previous Equality Steering Group and Athena Swan Steering Group. The revised structure will ensure representation from across the ICR and have a focus on streamlining action.

3. Gender equality

Data presented in the Equality Data Report shows that women comprised 61.0 per cent of staff and 64.7 per cent of our postgraduate students. Gender pay gap analysis shows that there is a lower proportion of women in the top quartile and a higher proportion in our lowest pay quartile.

Table 1: Percentage of female staff at each pay quartile

Pay Quartile	Percentage of female staff
Upper (Q1)	47.8%
Upper middle (Q2)	60.1%
Lower middle (Q3)	61.8%
Lower (Q4)	74.4%

Highlights of gender equity work in 2025:

Advancing women in leadership and career progression:

- **Cohort two of the Accelerate Leadership Programme** – The ICR’s Accelerate senior leadership programme, which is run in collaboration with The Royal Marsden and designed to support women and ethnic minority staff, ran for the second year. This initiative provides structured mentorship and development opportunities to prepare female and ethnic minority staff for leadership roles. Six ICR individuals are participating in the 2026 Accelerate cohort.
- **Women in Science** – This group offers a supportive and empowering community for the most senior female researchers in our community. The 2025 in-person event saw more than 20 attendees from the ICR, The Crick, Imperial, and The Royal Marsden, featuring leadership development workshops and networking sessions.
- **The launch of Aspiring Female Leaders in Science** – This network offers a supportive and empowering community for all female researchers in our community, from the most junior to the most senior. This network offers a series of talks from established senior female leaders from across the industry. The core focus is to inspire and support the next generation. We ran two hybrid events in 2025, each with more than 50 attendees.

Addressing gender pay gaps and workforce disparities

- **New appraisal system (2025)** – A new appraisal process was launched in 2025. This:
 - retains performance reviews and targeted bonus payments for high performers, while eliminating tiered annual percentage increases based on performance ratings to help mitigate potential bias.
 - sets all bonus payments at the same fixed sum regardless of salary (pro-rated for part-time staff).
 - limits bonus payments to the top performers across the ICR.
 - introduces complete transparency regarding those receiving bonus payments.
- **Gender pay gap reduction** – The mean gender pay gap decreased to 18.5 per cent. Without Clinical Consultants, the mean gender pay gap drops to 14.1 per cent. The table below shows the gender pay gap by pay quartile, demonstrating the substantial impact of individuals in the top quartile of pay, such as Clinical Consultants.

Table 2: Gender Pay Gap by Pay Quartile

Pay Quartile	Mean Gender Pay Gap
Upper (Q1)	16.8%
Upper middle (Q2)	-0.3%
Lower middle (Q3)	-0.9%
Lower (Q4)	-4.6%

Supporting women in research

- **Flexible working** – We have updated our flexible working policy and made it more comprehensive.
- **Career support** – We have made a concerted effort to raise awareness of the Conference & Training Care Support Fund, which helps parents and carers to attend conferences and professional development events. For example, this is now included in all communications related to the annual ICR Conference, and uptake is being reported on quarterly.
- **Baby and child first aid courses** – Based on feedback received from our Parents Network, we ran two baby and child first aid courses, which were attended by more than 40 colleagues.
- **Launch of Preventing Sexual Harassment training** – In response to Office for Students (OfS) guidelines and updates to the Worker Protection Act, we rolled out Preventing Sexual Harassment training as mandatory for all ICR employees and students. This is also covered in our ‘A Supportive Workplace’ induction training.
- **Growth of EDI networks, including the Parents’ and Gender Equality networks** – Efforts have been put into growing all networks and events, networking, learning and information sharing sessions, e.g. launching a support group for parents with neurodivergent children and the re-launch of the Gender Equality Network with a new Chair.

2025 saw continuing high demand for the existing leadership programmes, Aurora, Future Leaders and Accelerate.

- In 2025, the ICR awarded places to three women on Advance HE’s Aurora programme. This provides leadership development and gives individuals a network outside the ICR. In addition, we provided mentors of Aurora participants with specific mentorship training.

- Three individuals participated in Imperial’s IMPACT Development programme for diverse staff.

4. Race and ethnicity equality

Equality data for 2024/25 shows a slight increase in the proportion of Black and minority ethnic (BAME) staff (29.7 per cent in 2025, 28.7 per cent in 2024), which follows the gradual year-on-year upward trend both across the ICR and across London.

The percentage of BAME individuals receiving a promotion has decreased slightly but is in line with annual fluctuations (23.7 per cent in 2025, 30.7 per cent in 2024, 17.0 per cent in 2023). Similarly, the number of BAME leavers has increased slightly (36.5 per cent in 2025, 28.8 per cent in 2024), but this is proportionate to the number of BAME individuals at the ICR:

Table 3: Percentage of ICR staff who are BAME and percentage of staff who left the ICR who are BAME 2024/25

	% of BAME Staff	% of BAME leavers
2024/25	30%	30%
2023/24	33%	29%
2022/23	29%	30%

Supporting BAME staff and students is a key priority for the ICR. This will be enhanced through the growing Race, Ethnicity and Cultural Heritage Network (REACH), continuing development through targeted programmes, and continued focus on inclusive recruitment.

Advancing BAME career progression:

- Three BAME members of staff attended Imperial’s IMPACT development programme. A programme designed specifically to support the development of junior ethnic minority staff.
- Six BAME members of staff have enrolled onto the joint Royal Marsden and ICR development programme designed to support the development of senior minority staff.

5. Disability equality

Equality data for 2024/25 shows that 5.9 per cent of staff at the ICR declared a disability in 2025, which is an increase of 1.1 per cent from 2024 but still below the national average of around 25.0 per cent (gov.uk stats).

There will be a focused project through 2026 to raise awareness of disability support and encourage disclosure. This began in 2025 with events such as the visit from Professor Katherine Deane, which focused on making labs more accessible.

There is also a drive to gain Disability Confident status so we can ensure we are fully supporting the varied needs of our staff and students.

6. Equality networks

The three equality networks (REACH – Race Equality and Cultural Heritage, PRIDE Network for staff and students from LGBTQ+ groups, and DAWN – Disability at Work Network) are run in collaboration with The Royal Marsden and are represented on the Equality Steering Group.

The ICR also runs a Wellbeing Champions Network, covering both staff and students.

We run an additional seven equality networks within the ICR (Parents, Gender, Expats, Age, Carers, Cancer Support and Neurodiversity). Current focus is on growing participation, engagement and activity across all networks. The ICR works with the networks and consults them on major programmes and activities.

We have signed up for The Cultural Calendar Club for a second year. This provides 20 webinars throughout the year on a wide variety of EDI topics.

We work to recognise key religious and cultural celebrations throughout the year, such as Diwali, Easter, Hanukkah and Eid.

We are a Disability Confident Committed Employer.

Gender Equality Network

We have welcomed a new Network Chair.

The Gender Equality network is a growing, supportive network that ran events and activities throughout 2025. These included:

- Inspiring Future Female Leaders in Science series, including motivating talks by Professor Alex Richter, Professor of Clinical Immunology, University of

Birmingham and Dr Carol Lane – Director, Innovation Partnerships Europe, Philips.

- Women in Science events, including one virtual and one in-person cross-institutional event focused on development and networking.
- A series of webinars including: Menopause: Ask the Dr Anything!; and International Women’s Day: An imperfect world when feminism excludes...; and International Men’s Day – Panel discussion.
- Coffee meetups.
- Network surveys.

PRIDE Network

We have welcomed a new Network Chair.

The PRIDE network is an established, thriving network that ran events and activities throughout 2025. These included:

- Attending the BFI Flare London LGBTQIA+ Film Festival.
- Attended an LGBTQ+ tour of the Royal Opera House.
- Attending London Pride.
- A series of webinars including: Pride: Past, present & future, and International Non-Binary People’s Day: Being Trans and Non-Binary in the Workplace
- Regular craft and chat sessions at all RM and ICR locations.
- Ongoing book swap initiative.
- Games night.
- Pride picnic meetups.

Race Equality and Cultural Heritage Forum

We have welcomed a new Network Chair.

The REACH Forum is a growing network that ran events and activities throughout 2025. These included:

- Black History Month celebrations, including: A series of articles showcasing our diverse talent across the ICR; networking events across all sites; and a quiz night.
- A series of webinars, including: South Asian Heritage Month by activist Hannah Litt; Small Acts, Big Impact: Let’s Talk Microaggressions in the Workplace – for Black History Month; and Black Baby Loss Awareness Week.
- Themed lunches for events such as Eid, Diwali and South Asian Heritage month.
- Reading club with shared poetry and books.

Disability At Work Network

We have welcomed a new Network Chair.

The DAWN Network works closely with our Wellbeing colleagues and has support networks within it covering Neurodiversity, Caring and Cancer Care. This year has seen a growing focus on Neurodiversity. The network ran events and activities throughout 2025. These included:

- Creation of new support groups, including Neurodiversity and Parents with Neurodiverse Kids.
- Visit by Dr Katherine Deane, which included a talk on accessible labs, an accessibility walkthrough and a workshop session.
- A series of webinars, including International Day of Disability: Breaking Barriers Embracing Limitless Disability by Abdi Omar; Deaf Awareness Week – Are You Hearing Their Voice; and Working with ADHD.
- A programme of activity for Disability History Month, including a spotlight series where colleagues shared their lived experiences.

7. Training and career development

Mandatory training for all new staff and students now covers new legislative changes, including Sexual Harassment and Freedom of Speech. This runs monthly, alternating between sites. Between August 2024 and July 2025, 228 staff and students attended.

8. ICR-wide culture work

We continue to promote the use of Report + Support, which allows more effective reporting and tracking of unacceptable behaviour, and promotion of resources available to staff, students and visitors experiencing or observing such behaviours. It provides an additional tool to help us improve the working environment and ensure a supportive culture for all. Report + Support enables us to capture data on the protected characteristics of those experiencing unacceptable behaviour and whether the reporter believes that the unacceptable behaviour was on the grounds of any protected characteristic.

We use A Supportive Workplace/ Active Bystander training to promote Report + Support and provide further information on how the ICR manages reports (anonymous or named) made on this platform.

We have also focused on raising awareness of sexual misconduct, both in the induction training and wider internal communications channels, in line with new legislation.

Under Stratus (our HR information systems upgrade), we have also undertaken a significant workstream to clarify job roles and responsibilities, along with competencies, knowledge and skills required for each level and development on offer to support performance.

9. Strengthening career pathways for technicians

In November 2023, the ICR received a £1 million grant from Wellcome's Institutional Funding for Research Culture. This grant aims to address challenges in recruiting, retaining, and developing technicians, a career path in which women and BAME staff are well represented but which faces challenges in areas such as recognition and career development.

As part of this, the ICR developed three strands: entry-level, mid-level (Ignite), and senior (IgnitePLUS), all of which have been incredibly successful and received immense recognition and praise.

The entry-level strand, which focused on increasing diversity through offering non-traditional entry routes into science careers, offered eight level 3 laboratory technician apprenticeships. All eight apprentices passed, with three participating in degree apprenticeships at AstraZeneca, Guy's Hospital and The Royal Marsden, and three remaining at the ICR as junior technicians. This entry-level strand also received the Pharma Training and Education award at the 2024 Pharma Industry Awards, with Dr Amin Mirza, Head of Structural Chemistry, also winning the Apprentice Ambassador award.

As part of this work the team hosted a scientific apprenticeship conference at the Wellcome Collection with the aim of sharing learnings and resources. This event brought together 60 delegates from 34 organisations across academia, industry, and policy to explore the transformative role of scientific apprenticeships.

The mid-level strand, Ignite, was a collaborative development initiative open to technical professionals from the ICR, UCL, King's College London (KCL), the Francis Crick Institute, and Imperial. All participants were from life sciences and healthcare-related fields, including bioinformatics, analytical sciences, clinical research, laboratory and facility-based roles, biological services and research management. The programme feedback was exceptional, with 83.0 per cent of participants responding and 91.0 per cent recommending the programme to others. Ignite is now running for the third time.

The senior-level IgnitePLUS Programme is tailored for service-oriented technical managers. It is also a collaborative initiative, involving multiple institutions, with a second cohort now running. Ignite and IgnitePLUS were showcased as best practice at the ITSS Signatory Event, providing UK-wide visibility. Furthermore, IgnitePLUS was awarded the Bronze Staff Development Award: Developing Excellent Practice (Advance HE). The programme feedback for this strand was also exceptional, with 62.0 per cent of participants responding and 93.0 per cent rating the programme as excellent and recommending it to others.

As part of strengthening partnerships and providing technical staff with continued networking opportunities, we joined Techs Today and hosted a Techs Today event with 50+ participants from UCL, KCL, Imperial, Crick and Queen Mary University of London.

Although the Wellcome funding is coming to an end, Ignite will continue to be delivered by the ICR’s Learning and Organisational Development team as part of business-as-usual activity. We are also exploring options, with partners, for how to sustain IgnitePLUS, and we are engaging with Sutton Council and The London Cancer Hub on how to build on the apprenticeships work undertaken. Next steps are also focusing on promoting ongoing learning and impact through case studies and learning resources.

10. Update on outstanding 2024 equality objectives

Ref.	Objective	Owner	Progress update and next steps
2023/06	Short video webinar for summer students and contractors	EDI Manager	Complete: Content, including EDI essentials, has been created and shared on our intranet to allow access by all staff, students and contractors.

11. The Single EDI Action Plan and future equality objectives

Our Single EDI Action plan brings together priority actions from Athena Swan, The Gender Pay Gap Report, The People Strategy and other programmes such as The Technicians Commitment. This has been signed off and is being reported against on a quarterly basis to both the Management Committee and the Equality Steering Group.

Progress will be delivered through seven interconnected pillars of activity, supported by a Single EDI Action Plan and embedded within existing governance and leadership structures.

The overall focus of the Single EDI Action Plan remains consistent with our 2024 priorities, including:

- Reducing the gender and ethnicity pay gaps,
- Increasing the proportion of women in top quartile paying roles,
- Increasing the proportion of ethnic minority staff in top quartile paying roles.

The pillars of action that will be prioritised over the next year are:

1. **Helping parents, carers and flexible workers thrive** – Ensuring that caring responsibilities and flexible working do not limit progression, development or access to opportunities.
2. **Accurate, on-demand people analytics** – Improving disclosure, data quality and consistency to enable meaningful analysis, transparency and evidence-based decision-making.
3. **Driving an inclusive research culture** – Strengthening staff networks, building EDI capability across the organisation, and embedding inclusive behaviours into everyday practice.