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Magazine
October 2025



The large illustration on the Front Cover was generated using AI

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Introduction

Welcome



As Caroline Broadhurst prepares to lead her first Conference as CEO, she looks forward to the challenges the Rank Foundation faces, and how we might answer them by strategies such as working together and learning from those who have previously led effective change.

Caroline Broadhurst, CEO, The Rank Foundation

Working Together, Transforming Tomorrow

Welcome to the Autumn 2025 edition of Rank Ripples. Every article in this magazine speaks to

the spirit of our RankNet community: curious enough to explore fresh possibilities and compassionate enough to do so with care.

In collaboration with the RankNet Leaders Action Group and the wider RankNet community, we have chosen to explore three themes at the 2025 Annual Conference. Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIB), Artificial Intelligence (AI), and leadership. The themes are interconnected, and they are shaping our sector, which is why we've curated a programme of speakers and workshops to share best practices, demystify the jargon and inspire action.

The same three themes run through this collection of articles. In this edition, Claudette Dawson challenges us to see EDIB not as a problem to fix but as a powerful solution for stronger, more resilient

organisations. Lucy Jaffé calls on us to carry our charitable values into the digital realm. Amelia Wrighton

dares to ask difficult questions for social good.

Towards the end of the magazine, our

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describes how Suicide&Co is carefully using AI to expand support for people bereaved by suicide; Dom Honey shows how AI can free charity staff up to focus on mission rather than admin; while Nina Karwalska and Kye Lockwood urge us to stay alert to the ethical, social and environmental risks.

Together they remind us that technology can never replace human connection – as ever, it's all about relationships. Running through it all is leadership. Not leadership as a job title, but as an activity. The kind of leadership that builds belonging and

Director of Programmes Kai Wooder introduces The Change We Lead – a new programme we're offering to promote inclusion and give participants the opportunity for self-reflection and learning on anti-racism, intercultural awareness and intersectionality.

This edition of Ripples and our conference are invitations to learn from each other. So, take what you read here and start conversations in your own communities. Together, we are not just responding to changes – we can shape them. ●

Closing equity gap with AI

Lucy Jaffé describes how Artificial Intelligence can be both positive and detrimental to the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector and how important it is for organisations to use an equity-centred AI that will not reinforce existing biases against marginalised communities.

Lucy Jaffé Consultant, Jaffeworks



Artificial intelligence (AI) is no longer a distant frontier—it's already reshaping how charities, community groups, and social enterprises operate. From chatbots offering mental health support to predictive tools helping food banks anticipate demand, AI is quietly embedding itself into the fabric of the UK's voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector. Since the 1980s, when I did a Master's in Artificial Intelligence, I have been excited about the power and potential of AI to enable equitable communication, greater connection and democracy. Since then, I have worked for social justice campaigns and also for the commercial software industry. The recent policy work for Refuge on the Online Safety Act Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy highlighted the positives and dangers of AI for underrepresented and marginalised communities. And in this article, I ask, as transformation accelerates: will AI help close the equity gap—or deepen it?

The promise and peril of AI in the VCSE sector

AI offers enormous potential for

VCSE organisations. It can streamline operations, personalise services, and unlock insights from data that were previously out of reach. For overstretched teams, AI can be a lifeline—automating admin, enhancing fundraising, and improving service delivery. Yet without intentional design, AI risks reinforcing the very inequalities the sector exists to challenge. Here is an example from blackgirlnerds: "Predictive policing is a painfully obvious example of AI systems reproducing racial biases found in their training data. These AI systems make assessments about future crimes, who might commit them, and where, based on data such as location and personal information. But therein lies the issue, which could potentially exacerbate policing or even over-policing in communities along racial and ethnic lines." Algorithms trained on biased data can exclude marginalised communities. Automated systems may overlook those without digital access and introduce barriers for disabled people. Smaller organisations may lack the resources to adopt AI ethically or effectively. On the other hand, with the proper funding and expertise, they may be more versatile, more able to consult

their community of interest, and able to change quickly.

Equity: more than a buzzword

Equity means more than equal access. It requires that AI systems be designed with diverse communities, ensuring that the voices of those most affected by inequality are central to how these technologies are built and deployed. Major social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram are preparing to comply with the UK's Online Safety Act, but there is an urgent need to embed domestic violence survivors and advocates within their design and moderation teams to curb online abuse. It is no secret that harmful content drives revenues, and social media giants are slow to respond to reporting of harmful behaviour. Consider also a youth charity in East London that trialled an AI tool to match young people with local services. The algorithm, trained on historic referral data, consistently under-prioritised young people from migrant backgrounds. Why? Because past systems had failed to serve them adequately, the AI simply replicated that bias. I'm working with Restorativu, which has developed an AI-enabled mobile application for mentors and >>

“Be curious about how AI is already being used by your organisation and how it may be risking replicating systemic bias.”

facilitators. We have co-designed the app with people who have lived experience of youth violence, and the AI is being trained by lived experience mentors. This is not just an afterthought, but an embedded and strategic approach that the development team are taking. Equity must be baked into AI from the start—not patched on later. Take a look at Third Sector Lab’s recent examples of seven charities using AI to deliver.

(<https://thirdsectorlab.co.uk/7-charities-using-ai-to-deliever-impact/>)

Ask yourself where biases may be introduced and how your organisation could introduce mechanisms to mitigate against them.

Building equity-centred AI

What does equitable AI look like in practice? A community of interest involved in shaping how AI tools are

developed and used.

See Refuge recommendations for <https://refuge.org.uk/news/refuge-responds-to-ofcoms-guidance-a-safer-life-online-for-women-and-girls-consultation/> to tackle online domestic violence.

Transparent and accountable:

Use explainable AI models, share decision-making processes openly, and collaborate across the sector to reduce duplication and ensure access for smaller organisations. Ethical frameworks should align with initiatives like the UK’s data ethics framework or AI for Good (<https://aiforgood.itu.int/>) principles, and an AI policy should be agreed upon within your organisation.

Proper funding and resources:

encourage funders and the Government to invest in our valuable sector to ensure viability in the coming months and years.

A call to action

The VCSE sector’s role as a champion for justice, inclusion, and community-led change means we have a duty to carry those values into the digital realm.

That means advocating for inclusive tech policy. It means building digital literacy within our teams. And it

means demanding that AI tools reflect the diversity and dignity of the people we serve.

AI can be a tool for transformation—but only if we build it with equity at its core.

Key actions for VCSE leaders

- AI is already impacting the VCSE sector. Be curious about how AI is already being used by your community and organisation (ask the staff and volunteers!) and how it may be risking replicating systemic bias.
- Write and embed an AI policy and plan which reflects your community roots to design AI that serves everyone
- Equip your organisation to shape ethical, inclusive AI adoption by applying for grants and funds for community engagement, service design, advocacy and training. ●

Lucy Jaffé is a director of Restorativu, a board member of the European Forum of Restorative Justice, and an Advisor to The Media Trust’s Stronger Voices Programme and the Why me? Heritage Project. Lots more links and template policies can be found in the RankNet group: AI in the Third Sector.

<https://jaffeworks.com/>

Feature

Inclusion is a journey

Alejandra Arcila Alzate says that for her, inclusion is not only about theory but it is lived and tested daily in the smallest, most ordinary of human interactions.

Alejandra Arcila Alzate,
Office Manager, Greenhill YMCA



When we speak about inclusive leadership, the temptation is to imagine something neat: a framework, a checklist, a final destination. But in my experience, inclusion is not tidy. It's a journey that is ongoing, often uncomfortable and always deeply human.

At Greenhill YMCA, where I work, we welcome around 10,000 young people a year, supported by international volunteers who bring the wealth of their cultures, languages and perspectives. Most of my role is behind the scenes, but some of my most meaningful learning has come when I step into programme delivery. Those moments show me, again and again, that inclusion is not theory, it is lived and it is tested in the smallest, most ordinary interactions.

Lessons learnt

One summer, Greenhill partnered with local charities to host families of newly arrived migrants who were being housed in a nearby hotel. Basic needs were not being met, and together we worked to create opportunities for connection: family camps, play for children, rest for

mothers, and safe spaces where men could relax.

I could not have prepared myself enough for the complexity: families with babies in arms, teenagers with questions, parents navigating language, cultural and religious differences and many more. In the middle of this busy, beautiful chaos, I made a mistake.

I handed a bowl of crisps to a group of children, only to realise minutes later they were bacon-flavoured. My heart sank. I knew this would matter deeply to the Muslim families present. Once the kids realised there was silence in the whole room, a mother, one of the natural leaders of the group, stood up and talked to me. She looked at me with kindness, checked the wrapping, held my hand, reassured me it was flavouring only, and said, "It's ok." She spoke to the children and other mothers. The moment passed without fuss, and the group carried on with their activities.

That small exchange taught me more about inclusive leadership than any training manual could. The mother showed patience and care. She protected the trust within the group. She modelled how to lead through vulnerability rather than ego. In that moment, she was the inclusive leader.

What inclusive leadership is and isn't Inclusive leadership is not about being perfect or about allowing everything to pass in the name of being "polite." It is reflective. It takes time to think carefully about decisions, their implications, and how they are communicated. It is vulnerable: willing to admit mistakes, to say "I don't know," or "I was wrong." It has boundaries: caring for people while also being clear when lines are crossed, or when behaviour harms others. And it is active. A leader who fails to consider every member of their team, including their individual needs and contributions, is not truly leading inclusively.

The greatest enemy of inclusive leadership is ego. It's the voice that insists we are right, that resists feedback, that makes us defensive. I have learned that the moments when I most want to defend myself are often the moments when I most need to stop, listen, and reflect.

Principles in practice

From my experience, there are a few principles that anchor inclusive leadership:

1. Self-reflection. As Howard J. Ross reminds us in his book *Everyday Bias*: >>

Identifying and Navigating Unconscious Judgments in Our Daily Lives, "If you're human, you are biased." Awareness of your own identity, privilege and blind spots is the foundation for understanding others.

2. Inclusion requires openness: sharing your limitations, admitting when you don't know, and inviting others into the process.

3. It is not agreement, but a willingness to step into another's experience and hold space for them.

4. Reflection and empathy are limited without action. Courage is speaking up, having difficult conversations, and making change even when it is uncomfortable.

Inclusive leadership is not a tick-box exercise. It is embedded in everyday practice: revisiting conversations, challenging cultural habits that exclude, learning, and re-learning. Why this matters in the social sector The social sector is often where people come when other systems have failed them, or when they are at their most vulnerable. Others come to us seeking learning, growth, or a place of connection. In all cases, inclusion is not optional.

It is central to trust.

Communities are constantly changing and evolving, and change can be frightening. When organisations like ours create spaces for connection, where diversity is not an abstract idea but a lived encounter, we are doing more than running programmes. We are shaping communities. This is why inclusive leadership matters so much. Leaders set the tone. If leaders laugh at discriminatory jokes, excuse exclusionary behaviour, or postpone hard conversations, the space becomes unsafe. But when leaders challenge, learn, apologise, and act, the culture shifts.

Individual responsibility, collective change It is often said that systems need to change, and that is true. But systems and people are caught in a chicken-and-egg situation. We will never have systems that are ideally suited to an ever-evolving society. Which means the responsibility falls on us to act first, to take ownership and to lead inclusion in the spaces we control. And when that culture is shared, sustained and amplified, systems are eventually forced to change.

That is why networks like RankNet are so valuable: they create the community and support that makes persistence possible.

A continuing journey

Inclusive leadership is not a destination. It is dynamic, evolving and sometimes daunting. My most significant learning has been the importance of surrounding yourself with people who are also willing to reflect, to share good practice, and to say "it's ok" when mistakes inevitably happen.

For me, that is the value of RankNet and RLAG: platforms to connect with others who are doing inspiring work, to learn, to reflect and to keep growing together.

Inclusive leadership is not about being flawless. It is about being reflective, vulnerable, courageous and willing to act. It is about building spaces where everyone feels seen and valued and about recognising that we will never be finished because inclusion is not an endpoint. It is the ongoing work of building trust, one decision, one conversation, one act of courage at a time. ●

<https://www.greenhill-ymca.org/>

Problem to possibility



Claudette Dawson believes that diversity should not be framed as a problem because any attempt to fix it is hampered by resistance and misunderstanding. Instead, it should be embraced to enable the building of stronger and more resilient organisations.

Claudette Dawson, Facilitor of Learning Talk The Talk

Words have power. They shape our thoughts, stir emotions, and influence the way we see the world. For me, four words in particular carry a weight that's hard to ignore: Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, Belonging (EDIB). Each one evokes something different—hope, challenge, pride, discomfort. And depending on who you ask, each word means something entirely unique. What might happen if we took the time to look at these words differently?

Time to change the narrative

In boardrooms, team meetings, and strategy documents, conversations around EDIB are becoming more frequent. That's progress. Yet despite this growing awareness, many organisations still approach it as a problem to be solved—rather than the powerful solution it truly is.

Let's pause and unpick that

If EDIB is labelled as a "problem," what are we really saying? According to Oxford Languages, a problem is "a matter or situation regarded as unwelcome or harmful and needing to be dealt with and overcome." That definition alone reveals the flaw in

the framing. If diversity is seen as unwelcome, then any attempt to "fix" it is already soaked in resistance and misunderstanding. When genuinely embraced, EDIB becomes the foundation of stronger, smarter, and more resilient organisations. It deepens empathy,

misunderstanding born from a moment, a message, a mislabel.

Welcome to the world of diversity
Too often, diversity is treated like a label—something external, something assumed. It's boxed, simplified, and misunderstood. And

"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."

fuels innovation, and expands market reach.

A story about labels

Imagine this. You're minding your own business when someone hands you a coat and asks you to wear it for a few quick photos—for social media, nothing serious. You slip it on without thinking. But what you don't realise is that there's a label stuck to the back. A label that claims to define who you are and what you believe in. Except... It's not true. It's not you. Now, imagine people begin reacting to that label. They treat you differently—not based on who you are, but who they think you are. A

when organisations approach diversity this way, they risk turning a powerful concept into a limiting one. Diversity isn't a sticker. It's not a coat you wear for show. It's a lived experience, a collective strength, and a strategic advantage—when it's understood and embraced authentically.

How do we reframe the narrative?

We start by embedding EDIB into the principles of ourselves and the organisations we work in and with. Not as a temporary initiative, but as a permanent lens through which we view leadership, culture, and growth. >>

We measure progress with transparency. We invest in belonging—not just representation. And we empower diverse voices, at every level.

To start our reframing, we could reflect first on a few common mistakes that can sometimes go unnoticed in the world of EDIB.

Mistake 1: Focusing on One Word—Usually Diversity

Hiring for diversity is essential, but it's not enough. Without inclusion and belonging, diverse talent won't thrive. Too often, organisations overlook the cultural and psychological safety (the confidence and assurance that individuals can share ideas, ask questions, voice concerns, or admit mistakes without fear of punishment, humiliation, or other negative consequences) needed for everyone to feel valued. It's time to build environments where every voice is heard, and every person feels they truly belong.

Mistake 2: Sharing EDIB as a One-Off Initiative

Some organisations launch EDIB programmes with enthusiasm, only to let them fade into the background. When EDIB becomes a tick-box exercise, it fails before it begins. Employees see through it. They know when something isn't built to last. EDIB must be woven into long-term strategy—not pinned to a single workshop or awareness week.

Mistake 3: Lack of Visible Leadership Commitment

If senior leaders aren't visibly and consistently championing EDIB, efforts fall short. Inclusion cannot thrive in silence or be delegated as someone else's responsibility. Leaders must actively model inclusive behaviours, sponsor meaningful initiatives, and be held accountable for progress. EDIB requires bold, vocal advocates woven through every layer of the organisation.

Mistake 4: The big one – Treating EDIB as just another project

To truly succeed, organisations must embed EDIB into their DNA—through leadership, strategy, data, and culture. Avoid quick fixes, listen deeply and intentionally, and commit to the long haul. As people feel seen, heard, and valued, everyone wins. So ultimately...

It's time to stop talking about EDIB and start living it. Not as a fix to a perceived problem, but as the key to unlocking the full potential of our people and our organisations. Because when we change the narrative, we change the outcome. And that begins with the words we choose—and the actions we take next. ●

<https://talkthetalkuk.org/>

Feature

AI can amplify human roles

Amelia Wrighton says the aim of her organisation is to leverage AI not to replace human connections, but to increase their ability to provide timely, effective and compassionate care and personal support to their clients.

Amelia Wrighton, Co-founder and CEO, Suicide&Co



When ChatGPT first burst onto the scene, like many, we at Suicide&Co were met with a mix of scepticism and intrigue. The tell-tale signs of AI-generated text were often evident, with countless dashes and emojis everywhere, but we were excited about learning more. As a young charity, we've always prided ourselves on being forward-thinking and adaptable. Ultimately, we recognised that we couldn't afford to dismiss a technology with the potential to significantly enhance our work and improve efficiency. Before delving into our AI journey, it's important to introduce our work for those who may not be familiar. Suicide&Co is a national charity to support those bereaved by suicide and open up the conversation around suicide-related grief to prevent mental health deterioration after the trauma of losing a loved one to suicide.

We are a service delivery charity that focuses on providing one-to-one care to our community through our counselling and casework, and we use technology to bolster that support, with an App that offers self-care tools and guidance. Our vision is to provide adults bereaved by suicide in England and Wales with timely and effective support, because everyone deserves to feel like they have permission to grieve.

Our community is bigger than you might think. In 2023, 6,069 people

died by suicide in England and Wales (ONS) and for every person gone, there are said to be 135 people affected and six people directly bereaved. This means our target community is between 36,000 and 819,000 people each year. People who are largely suffering in silence and need support rebuilding their lives around their grief. Those numbers fuel our ambition to take technology seriously, as they are vital for scaling our service delivery. So it was back to AI.

Our initial cautious optimism quickly evolved into a proactive exploration of how AI could benefit our charity. The paramount concern, given the sensitive nature of our work, was security. We rigorously researched and ultimately adopted AI tools that met our data protection requirements. Currently, we use Gemini for the majority of tasks and Jamie AI for securely recording meetings, allowing us to focus on the conversation rather than extensive note-taking.

With the security aspect addressed, the next crucial step was to thoughtfully consider where and how AI would be integrated into our operations. We decided on a two-pronged approach. Firstly, within our service operations, AI is used to streamline administrative processes and enhance internal workflows, but with an absolute and unwavering commitment to never utilising any client data with these

tools. Confidentiality and trust are the cornerstones of our work, and this boundary is non-negotiable. Secondly, our growth team enthusiastically embraced AI. Here, it has been a game-changer for tackling the dreaded "blank page syndrome." Whether it's crafting compelling email campaigns, refining our website copy, or conducting essential research, AI acts as a powerful brainstorming partner and an invaluable assistant, helping us to articulate our message even more effectively. It allows our team to focus on strategic thinking and human connection, rather than getting bogged down in initial drafting. Can you tell AI wrote that paragraph?

Our AI journey is still in its early stages, and we have a long way to go. However, the benefits we have already experienced are significant, allowing us to be more efficient and impactful in our work. We are now focused on building a more robust AI policy for staff and exploring the role of AI in our practical client support offering.

Our ultimate goal is to leverage these incredible tools not to replace human connections but to amplify our ability to provide timely, effective, and compassionate support to those who need it most, ensuring that no one has to face the aftermath of suicide alone. ●

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

Feature

AI's ethical challenges



Nina Karwalska explains that because Futures in Films work is about people, they must uphold the highest standard of ethics for AI. The question is not whether AI will be used; it is whether it will serve the organisation's values.

Nina Karwalska, Strategic Operations & Production Manager, Futures in Film CIC

Artificial Intelligence is reshaping every sector of society, from healthcare and education to housing and creative industries. The social sector is no exception to this. However, our work is about people, and that is why we must hold to the highest standards of ethics as AI begins to touch how we work. The key to achieving this is learning as much as we can and understanding the ethical challenges and how to mitigate and work around them. At Futures in Film CIC, where we create access into film and high-end television for underrepresented and faith communities, we have seen how disruptive AI can be. In 2023, writers and actors took strike action across the United States, protesting low pay, unsafe working conditions, and the threat of AI replacing human creativity. This led to an industry-wide shutdown of productions, resulting in an economic impact of \$5bn in the US alone. The clear lesson from this is that AI is a tool, but it mustn't be allowed to replace human imagination and creativity. The same applies across the social sector. Whether organisations work with homeless people, mentor at-risk youth, or provide community sports programmes, the challenge is not about adopting AI for efficiency; it is

about making sure technology never undermines the values that define our work.

By recognising the ethical challenges AI raises, we can prepare, adapt, and prevent harm before it occurs.

Research consistently highlights the values that underpin good practice: justice, dignity, solidarity, and accountability (Machado et al., 2020; NASW Standards, 2017).

In healthcare, systematic reviews of AI ethics echo these same concerns: fairness, transparency, privacy, and responsibility (Neiva et al., 2023; PLOS Digital Health, 2025). These shape how we interact with people every day.

Key Ethical Challenges

Fairness and bias

AI systems learn from data, and that data often carries the inequalities of the world it comes from. This means AI can replicate and even amplify existing patterns of disadvantage. For the social sector, fairness underpins trust. If technology quietly excludes or misrepresents the very people we aim to serve, the damage to relationships can be lasting.

Reflection: Are the tools we use tested for fairness, or do we assume neutrality where none exists?

Transparency and accountability

Many AI systems produce outcomes without clear explanations. This is a challenge for organisations that pride themselves on openness. If we cannot explain why a decision was influenced by AI, we risk undermining trust. Accountability is equally vital: when harm occurs, responsibility must rest with people, not hidden systems.

Reflection: Can we explain the role AI plays in our decisions, and do we know who is answerable if things go wrong?

Consent and privacy

AI complicates what it means to give informed consent. A single agreement can lead to data being reused or shared in ways that service users never anticipated. In contexts where trust is fragile, this can deter people from engaging at all. Privacy is not only about compliance but about dignity, agency and the confidence that personal stories remain under an individual's control.

Reflection: Does our approach to consent empower people, or does it prioritise organisational convenience?

Human dignity and autonomy

Efficiency is often presented as AI's strength, but efficiency is not the >>



same as care. When people are reduced to data points or scores, individuality is lost. The social sector's strength lies in human relationships, empathy and judgment. If these are displaced by technology, we risk hollowing out the very heart of our work.

Reflection: Are we allowing AI to support human judgment, or letting it redefine what good practice looks like?

Equity of access

AI often requires resources and expertise that smaller organisations may not have. This risks widening the

gap between large institutions and grassroots groups, and by extension, the communities they represent. Equity means not only ensuring access to tools, but also ensuring that diverse voices shape how AI is developed and deployed.

Reflection: Are smaller organisations included in decisions about AI, or forced to adapt to systems built without them?

Moving Forward with Awareness

To meet the opportunity as well as the challenge of AI, we must engage critically: questioning bias, accountability, consent, dignity, and equity when adopting new systems. Human oversight must remain central. The values of justice, solidarity, and care must remain our guide.

At Futures in Film CIC, we have learned that disruption is inevitable. AI can support our work, but only if it remains people-focused and is used as a tool. The question is not whether AI will be used; it is whether it will serve our values. ●

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

The illustration above was generated using AI.

Could AI be a Catch-22?

Kye Lockwood says that although AI can bring benefits, it also might have hidden costs and biases that undermine an organisation's mission. A question to ask is: Do these tools align with your values?

Kye Lockwood, CEO, DataKind



At DataKind UK, we've been debating the question, 'How can charities use generative AI tools responsibly?' so much that we recently hosted a [webinar](#) to explore this further. It's a challenge for a sector rooted in values, ethics, and justice that, like many of the challenges we address, doesn't have an easy one-size-fits-all solution. You might expect, as the 'data experts,' that we'd have all the answers. However, we believe that defining 'responsible AI' must be rooted in your own organisation's values, not in a universal checklist. Just as we support charities with their impact, we don't claim to be the experts on what constitutes impact (that's for you and your beneficiaries to decide). Similarly, we can't be prescriptive about what responsible AI looks like for every charity.

Before we go any further, let's define what we're talking about when we talk about AI. Here, I'm focusing on generative AI, which is artificial intelligence that creates new content, such as text, images, or even videos. Think of ChatGPT writing emails, DALL-E creating images, or tools like Claude helping with reports. Unlike traditional software that follows set rules, these systems learn patterns

from massive amounts of data and use that knowledge to generate something new. These models work by predicting what should come next. When you ask ChatGPT a question, it's essentially making incredibly sophisticated guesses about what the most likely response would be, based on patterns it learned during training. It's remarkably good at this, but it's still making educated guesses and crucially not accessing some database of truth. Indeed, what makes these tools so convincing can also be their downfall. AI can confidently present completely false information: earlier this year, the [BBC found that 51% of AI-generated news summaries had issues](#).

Be aware of the potential costs

These systems can perpetuate existing biases, struggle with mathematical calculations, and create what's increasingly known as 'slop': AI summaries of dubious usefulness filling previously helpful platforms.

Then there are the significant environmental and social costs that many charities (especially those focused on sustainability or social justice) need to confront when considering GenAI use. According to

[MIT](#), "researchers have estimated that a ChatGPT query consumes about five times more electricity than a simple web search," and the infrastructure required for AI is incredibly [resource-intensive](#).* Coupled with this is the human cost: behind every "intelligent" system are human workers, often in the Global South, labelling data and reviewing AI outputs in jobs that frequently involve disturbing content and are typically low-paid with poor working conditions. The question for your charity becomes stark: Does using these tools align with your values around environmental protection and fair labour practices? However, it is this tension between utility and values that sits at the core of responsible AI adoption.

Problem before Tech

At DataKind UK, our most fundamental approach is one that echoes throughout all our work: start with the problem you are trying to solve and not the technology. We've seen charities deploy generative AI for the more typical use cases such as note-taking or content generation for fundraising, reports or marketing. But we've also seen some fantastically innovative uses, such as Citizens >>

“Remember, your goal isn’t to be cutting-edge, it’s to better serve your mission in a way that doesn’t undermine the very causes you’re working to support.”

Advice’s “[Caddy](#)” copilot that helps advisors quickly find information (with crucial human oversight); seen [AI combat disinformation](#), and witnessed organisations using AI to analyse thousands of survey responses to draw out themes in moments that would have previously taken weeks to identify manually.

A Guiding Framework

Unfortunately, we can’t hand you a ready-made checklist for responsible AI. However, the folks over at mySociety have developed an [excellent AI framework](#) that can be applied to charities. It covers six domains:

- Practical questions: Are we solving a real problem, or working backwards from a solution? Is this the best way to address our challenge, or are we just excited by new technology?
- Societal questions: What are the best and worst-case scenarios of

our AI use? Is this shift consistent with our strategy and ethical framework?

- Legal and ethical questions: What’s the nature of the organisation producing these tools? Is the training data publicly available? Are we comfortable with the intellectual property implications?
 - Reputational questions: Does this tool touch on areas requiring high accuracy or trust? Could it create potential for bad-faith attacks on our services?
 - Infrastructural questions: What are the long-term costs of deploying this tool? Do we have the skills to manage it sustainably?
 - Environmental questions: Are we tracking the ongoing environmental impact? Are there more efficient alternatives?
- Responsible tech use means using it strategically where it genuinely adds value, while advocating for more sustainable and ethical AI

development, such as championing open-source tools, using ‘[frugal AI](#)’, and [interrogating AI supply chains](#). Ask challenging questions: Do these tools align with your values? Are there less resource-intensive alternatives?

Remember, your goal isn’t to be cutting-edge, it’s to better serve your mission in a way that doesn’t undermine the very causes you’re working to support. Sometimes that means using AI responsibly. Sometimes it means choosing not to use it at all. ●

*(Estimates vary, and a major difficulty is lack of transparency and data, though public pressure is slowly changing that).

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

Feature

The change we lead

Kai Wooder announces a new programme, The Change We Lead, that will promote inclusion and give participants opportunity for self-reflection and learning about anti-racism, intercultural awareness and intersectionality.

Kai Wooder, Director of Programmes,
The Rank Foundation

Celebrating difference to build inclusive communities

In summer 2024, many of us were deeply affected by the race riots and the underlying issues the riots exposed. As a Foundation with an extensive and engaged network, we adopted a listening approach, engaging with members of our Network and RankNet Leaders Action Group to identify how we, as an organisation and a community, could best understand the causes of the riots and implement anti-racist solutions. Many members of our community talked about the need for brave spaces, facilitated conversations to help us reflect on deep social issues, including the intersectionality between race, poverty and class. Deep discussions over several meetings with the RankNet Leaders Action Group (RLAG) led to the co-creation of a new Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging (EDIB) programme for the Rank Network

and staff, titled The Change We Lead. The name of the programme intends to demonstrate an intention to learn together and to create and action change. This new initiative will offer 50 Network places, in cohorts of 10.

- Each participant will be part of a consistent cohort, working together through eight facilitated sessions, a mixture of online and in-person.
- Five of the sessions will, at the request of the Network, promote inclusion through a dedicated focus on anti-racism, inter-cultural awareness and intersectionality, including disability & LGBTQ+ inclusion.
- Three sessions will be facilitated as Brave Spaces, giving participants an opportunity for self-reflection, unconscious bias training and a focus on exclusionary practices to foster accountability.

The Change We Lead will be cost-free to participants. RLAG will launch the programme at our annual conference in October 2025, and the training will begin in January 2026. Thank you to everyone who has helped to create this pilot programme; individuals who shared their personal experiences of racialised hate and violence, organisations who shared ideas for taking solutions forward, place-based leaders who were open about deeper causes and the need for anti-racist programmes and to RLAG, for remaining energised and determined to work together for change. ●

<https://rankfoundation.com/>

Feature

My 10 top tips for using AI

Dom Honey says AI has the power to transform how non-profits operate, enabling them to work smarter, reach further, and achieve better results allowing them to focus more on their core missions.



Dom Honey, Director, Event Results

I have been deploying AI for over five years to improve attendee networking and increase engagement. I work in events and build communities of practice. AI entered the public's consciousness with the launch of ChatGPT some two years ago. Since then, there has been an extraordinary avalanche of AI-powered services, as well as AI enhancing the tools we use daily. Like events, the world of non-profits is constantly evolving. It is driven by the unwavering commitment to making a positive impact. AI has the power to transform how non-profits operate, enabling them to work smarter, reach further, and achieve better results. For many, the term "AI" might conjure images of complex algorithms or raise job security concerns. However, the reality is that AI encompasses a broad spectrum of tools, many of which are becoming increasingly accessible and user-friendly. From automating mundane tasks to providing deep insights into donor behaviour, AI is allowing non-profits to focus more on their core missions and less on admin. Of course, the adoption of any new technology comes with considerations. Non-profits must be mindful of data privacy, potential biases in AI models, and the importance of maintaining a human

touch in their interactions. AI should augment, not replace, the empathy and personal connection that are at the heart of non-profit work. My 10 Tips for Using AI:

1. Start Small, Think Big: Don't try to implement AI everywhere at once. Identify one specific challenge (e.g. donor retention, volunteer recruitment) and explore an AI solution for that.
2. Prioritise Ethical AI Use: Always consider data privacy, transparency, and potential biases. Ensure human oversight of AI-driven decisions. Always test and check results.
3. Focus on Data Quality: AI thrives on good data. Invest in cleaning and organising your existing data before feeding it into AI tools.
4. Leverage Existing Tools: Many CRM systems and marketing platforms are integrating AI features. Explore what you already have before seeking new solutions.
5. Embrace Chatbots for FAQs: Deploy a chatbot on your website to handle common inquiries from donors, volunteers, and beneficiaries, freeing up staff time.

6. Personalise Fundraising: Use AI to segment donors and tailor your outreach messages. Small personal touches can make a big difference.

7. Automate Repetitive Tasks: Identify administrative tasks like data entry, email responses, or report generation that AI can automate.

8. Explore Content Generation: Experiment with generative AI tools to assist in drafting social media posts, creating podcasts, blog outlines, or even initial drafts of grant narratives.

9. Invest in Training: Provide your staff with basic training on AI concepts and how to use AI tools effectively.

10. Measure and Iterate: Continuously monitor the performance of your AI solutions. Analyse the results and be prepared to adjust and refine your approach.

Bonus tip! AI-powered platforms I use regularly include Gemini, Swapcard, Castmagic and NotebookLM. ●

<https://eventresults.net/>

News

Fellowship News

Rosalie Kerr, Alumni Development Officer
The Rank Foundation



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

The Fellowship has been a key focus for both John (Rank's Director of Education and Leadership) and me. We've been exploring how the long-running School Leadership Award feeds into the Fellowship and how to make the alumni network as valuable as possible. Over the past few months, I've enjoyed strengthening connections, working on the Theory of Change with Siobhan Edwards, and helping shape a clear vision for the Fellowship. Below are some of the key highlights from our work since April.

Fellowship Futures: Supporting Early Career Fellows
In April, Fellows gathered at the

Garden Walk offices for Fellowship Futures, an event designed to support early-career Fellows navigating the beginnings of their professional journeys (photo overleaf). The session provided a practical space for connecting with peers and gaining insights from more experienced Fellows across various sectors. Hosted by John Hind, Director of Education and Leadership, and Louisa Mundachali Searle, Chair of the Fellows Leadership Team, the event began with a candid talk from Felix Haynes (Class of 2017), now Senior Crypto Policy Advisor at the Financial Conduct Authority. Felix shared advice on managing

job expectations, preparing for interviews, and making the most of recruitment platforms. A panel discussion followed, featuring Stuart Wilson (Class of 1984), Poppy Robinson (Class of 2017), and Sophia Ashroff (Class of 2017), who reflected on their varied career paths—from the third sector to corporate roles—and offered lessons learned along the way. Thanks are due to all speakers and attendees for contributing to a thoughtful and encouraging session. Fellowship Futures highlighted the strength of the network and the value of sharing experience across generations of Fellows. >>



Learning Through Leadership:

‘What does it mean to be radical in these times?’ with Hugh Knowles (Class of 1993)
The 2025 Learning Through Leadership series began in May with a powerful talk from Hugh Knowles on what it means to be a radical leader today. Drawing on his career in climate activism and innovation, Hugh spoke about the challenges we face as a society, and the part individuals can play in driving change. An emergent theme was the role of AI in shaping leadership and community action. He described the surge in AI development as a “mad rush,” pointing to the scale of investment and the difficulties this creates in

managing its impact. While AI has clear potential to support environmental work, Hugh cautioned that too much reliance on digital tools can weaken the human connections that make effective leadership and community organising possible. He encouraged us to think less about whether AI is “good” or “bad” and more about how it changes leadership, organisational culture, and our understanding of what being “radical” really means. Hugh also reflected on the experiences that shaped his path, from volunteering with WaterAid in Nepal at the age of 18 to co-leading Friends of the Earth until 2024. He stressed the power of local

Left: The Fellowship Futures meeting

campaigns, sharing the example of the successful fight against a coal mine in Merthyr Tydfil. The session ended with a lively Q&A on AI, sustainability in education, and grassroots leadership, leaving Fellows with fresh perspectives and renewed energy for their own work.

Welcome to the Fellowship Class of 2023

This year, 25 outstanding School Leadership Award holders joined the Rank Fellowship, and celebrated at our Garden Walk office in Shoreditch. Fellows travelled from across the UK to attend, with the day hosted by John Hind, Director of Education and Leadership, and opened by Fellowship Chair Louisa Searle, who highlighted the opportunities offered by the alumni network, including events, mentoring, and RankNet. Natalie Humber, Digital Hub Manager, introduced new members to RankNet, while keynote speaker Jordan Ignatius, Managing Director of Reaching Higher, shared his leadership journey, encouraging small, consistent actions to achieve big goals. The day also showcased stories from SLA holders’ summer Community Action Placements, illustrating the tangible impact >>



Learning through Leadership with Hugh Knowles



Fellowship 2023 Class keynote speaker Jordan Ignatius

they’ve made with Rank partner charities. The event concluded with refreshments and lively conversation, providing everyone with an opportunity to reconnect and celebrate their achievements. A big thankyou to all who attended and best wishes to the SLA Class of 2023 as they embark on their next adventures.

School Leadership Award Update: A Summer of CAP

This year, the School Leadership Award programme introduced a small but important change. In the past, the award supported school fees and later university tuition. Recognising the challenges students face starting higher education, the programme now allows recipients to use their grant toward tuition or

as a maintenance loan, giving them greater flexibility to meet their individual needs. In September, our annual Leadership Day welcomed the new Class of 2025 to the SLA programme and brought back the Class of 2024 for their second year at the University of Chester. The day featured inspiring talks from trustee Joel Buchanan and trainer Jen MacKay, encouraging students to develop creative social enterprise ideas and explore their leader-ship potential. The 24-hour event highlighted the energy, talent, and collaboration that the SLA fosters among participants. The first half of the year was also a busy time for Community Action Placements (CAP). Through Rank Connections, 47 students

were placed across 16 charities and organisations, putting their leadership skills into practice and making a tangible difference in their communities. Below, we share some highlights and stories from these placements.

Anisah Ahmed at Barking & Dagenham Giving

Anisah Ahmed reflected positively on her time at Barking and Dagenham Giving, highlighting the wide range of skills she developed. “I learnt a range of skills, from working within a team on different projects and schedules to enhancing my public speaking and presenting skills through my final report and project,” she said. She also described learning Braun and Clarke’s coding methods >>



The Fellowship Class of 2023 with Louisa Searle



Community Action Placement Anisah Ahmed

after transcribing open-ended interviews, noting, “I learnt an array of widespread skills that I can use during my degree apprenticeship at Deloitte... and in future work learning how to conduct qualitative data.”

Anisah gained valuable insights into the charity sector, observing that “the disparity and information gaps of the perceptions of charities is very prevalent in society,” while recognising the variety of career paths available, from finance and project management to marketing. She credited the Rank Foundation with boosting her confidence, reflecting, “Rank has allowed me to build a confidence that I would never expect, from visiting university campuses overnight away from home to speaking in front of

trustees of the Foundation.” This support inspired her ambitions to pursue a degree apprenticeship at Deloitte and her dream career as a consultant.

St Andrews Summer School

Ten members of the 2024 School Leadership Award cohort spent a week at the Rank Summer School at the University of St Andrews, organised by the inspirational Prof Tobias Jung, exploring leadership, entrepreneurship, and philanthropy. The week combined imaginative exercises, practical challenges, and expert insights in the historic university setting. John and I had the privilege of joining the SLA holders on this trip. Activities included leadership scenarios, such as imagining

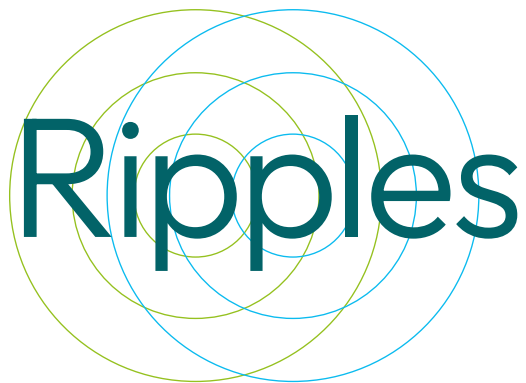
themselves shipwrecked with St Andrew’s relics, and creative entrepreneurship workshops where students developed innovative solutions using 3D paper and cardboard prototypes. Sessions led by Prof Carole Elliott and Prof Paul Tibbert encouraged reflection on leadership styles, rhetoric, and entrepreneurial thinking. Visits to Dundee introduced students to the wider Rank network, with talks from Andrew Muirhead, Kirsty Thomson, Danielle Gaffney du Ploy, and John Alexander, alongside hands-on experiences such as the urban garden at the MaxWell Centre. A special thank you to our Associate for Dundee, David Dorward, for organising the day. Philanthropy was explored in depth, including a visit to Andrew >>



Carnegie’s birthplace in Dunfermline, prompting students to reflect on meaningful acts of giving. Students left inspired, recognising that leadership comes in many forms, innovation and teamwork are central to success, and small, intentional acts can create real impact. As Eunice reflected, “Work on leadership, enterprise and philanthropy has allowed me to reflect and recognise my own personal growth and potential... I’ve already taken my first steps here.” ●

Images: Above, St Andrews Summer School. Right, Leadership Day





[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.

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