DRINKS UNITED

Impact Report

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

Phase 1 Impact Report
August 2026

Why we Exist

The UK drinks industry is built on people — on hospitality, creativity, expertise and community. But across the industry, too many people still experience discrimination, harassment, exclusion, unsafe working environments, and inconsistent support.

For many businesses, the challenge was not a lack of intent. It was a lack of shared tools, practical guidance, industry coordination, and accessible support. Drinks United was established to help change that.

Founded as a collaboration between The WSTA, WSET and The Drinks Trust, Drinks United was created with a clear vision:

> **A united UK drinks industry where everyone feels safe, included, and supported.**

Our **consultations with those who work in UK drinks** identified consistent priorities:

- Safer workplaces and events
- Inclusive hiring and progression
- Practical support for SMEs
- Better tools for safety at work
- Clearer reporting pathways
- Stronger leadership accountability

Our **first UK-wide workforce survey** reinforced the scale of the challenge:

- 1 in 5 workers reported feeling unsafe at work
- 1 in 3 experienced discrimination or harassment, with over half of incidents unreported
- Nearly 1 in 4 considered leaving the industry because of discrimination or harassment
- 7 in 10 workers wanted stronger action on safety at work and inclusion

These findings made one thing clear: these issues are a business sustainability issue for the future of the drinks sector.

"Drinks United's aim is to create a more inclusive industry that reflects and celebrates its diverse communities. By highlighting the challenges and work of organisations supporting individuals and businesses across the sector"
- Michelle Brampton, CEO, WSET

Executive Summary

Drinks United was established to help the drinks industry address persistent challenges around safety, inclusion, and culture through a practical, industry-led approach.

What we delivered in Phase 1

- Established independent governance and an active Advisory Council.
- Built shared safety and support infrastructure for the industry.
- Launched a central resource hub connecting trusted providers and tools.
- Delivered the first cross-industry culture survey.
- Convened leaders and practitioners to shape collective priorities.

What the industry told us

- A clear call for stronger and more visible leadership accountability.
- Significant gaps in experience and perception between senior leaders and others.
- Demand for practical tools, shared standards, and peer support, not one-off initiatives.

What this enabled

- A shared, evidence-based understanding of workforce experiences across the sector.
- Improved clarity and access to support, particularly for organisations without in-house capability.
- A trusted platform for collaboration without duplication.

What matters in Phase 2

Phase 2 shifts the focus to adoption, accountability, and measurable change — ensuring we deliver real and meaningful impact across the industry.

This progress has been made possible through the commitment and support of Drinks United's Partners and Advisory Council - thank you so much.

Michelle Brampton, WSET
Miles Beale, WSTA
Nicky Burston, The Drinks Trust

Our Approach

Vision

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

Mission

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

Strategic 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.

Strategic objectives

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

> In a people-driven industry built on relationships, hospitality and trust, **culture is not separate from business performance.**
>
> Drinks United exists to help the industry respond collectively and practically.

Through partnerships, leadership engagement, research, resources and support services, we aim to help build workplaces that are safer, fairer, more inclusive, and better equipped to support the people who power the industry every day.

"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

What we achieved

Building Industry Infrastructure

We established a cross-industry Programme Board and Advisory Council, bringing together leaders and specialists from across wine, beer, spirits, hospitality, education, wellbeing and DEI.

The Advisory Council included 21 members, with dedicated working groups focused on Drinks United's four strategic pillars: safe, supported, inclusive and united.

Creating Industry Resources & Support

Phase 1 focused heavily on creating accessible, practical support infrastructure for both individuals and businesses. This included the launch of:

- **Drinks United Resource Hub: resources.drinksunited.co.uk/**
- **Drinks Trust Support Line expansion: 0800 915 4610**
- **Drinks United Support Bot: drinksunited.co.uk/supportline**

The **Resource Hub** provides centralised access to safety at work and DEI tools, templates, policies and specialist providers, including sexual harassment policy templates, Safe Events 360 guidance, and inclusion resources.

1.7K INTERACTIONS

The confidential **Support Line**, delivered in partnership with The Drinks Trust, expands access to trained counsellors for workplace issues including harassment, discrimination and unsafe situations.

10% CALL INCREASE

The AI-powered **Support Bot,** developed with SaferSpace, provides immediate guidance and signposting for people seeking support. Early usage themes include sexual harassment, bullying, race-related harassment and maternity discrimination.

117 INTERACTIONS

20
Founding partners

21
Advisory Council members

680
Survey responses

72
Leadership summit attendees

23
Leaders trained in active bystanding

Since launch in November 2025

The Drinks United Culture Survey

Establishing a baseline for Change

The first independent, cross-sector DEI survey of the UK drinks workforce. Commissioned by Drinks United, administered by IWSR.

The first UK drinks industry wide baseline for workplace culture and safety at work.

680
responses from across hospitality, retail, production, distribution, education & services

1st
independent cross-sector workforce survey for the UK drinks industry

7 in 10
workers want stronger action on safety at work, inclusion and workplace culture

S Safety at Work

1 in 5
workers felt unsafe at work

37%
of hospitality & retail workers reported safety concerns

Groups disproportionately affected:

- Gen Z
- Neurodivergent
- LGBTQIA+
- Frontline staff

D Discrimination & Harrassment

1 in 3
workers experienced discrimination or harassment

37%
of incidents were never reported

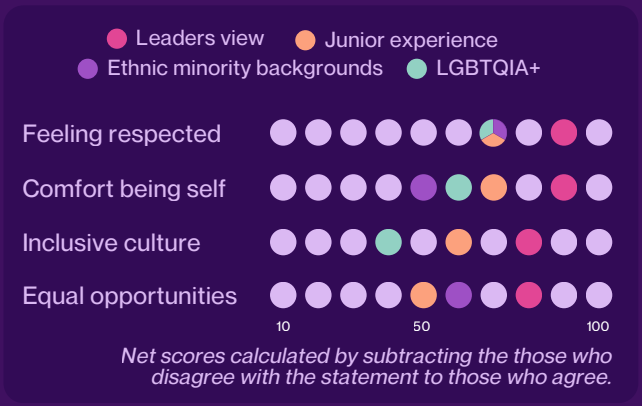
24%
considered leaving the industry because of it

The Drinks United Culture Survey

Establishing a baseline for Change

I Inclusion & Leadership Gap

Senior leaders consistently rate their organisations as more inclusive than employees actually experience.



A Alcohol Culture

A largely unaddressed risk — directly linked to harassment and safety at work.

71%
received no training on alcohol in the workplace

44%
unaware of alcohol conduct policies

27%
felt pressured to drink at work

7 in 10

Workers want stronger action on safety at work, inclusion and workplace culture.

The survey gave the industry its first credible evidence base for change — moving the conversation from anecdote to data, and from awareness to practical action.

Download the full UK Drinks Industry Culture Survey report at drinksunited.co.uk/survey

"Drinks United is a groundbreaking movement that brings people and businesses together to build a stronger, more equitable and more resilient future for the drinks industry workforce"

Nicky Burston, CEO, The Drinks Trust

Convening Leaders & Driving Industry Conversation

London Wine Fair, 2026.

Drinks United Leadership Summit, 2025.

Sustainability in Drinks, 2025.
Photo Credit Thomas Skovsende

Drinks United created spaces for industry-wide dialogue, leadership engagement and shared learning.

In February and June 2025, we convened industry leaders in small group roundtables discussing the challenges facing the industry and sharing best practices for change.

In November 2025, we hosted the first Drinks United Leadership Summit, bringing together **72 leaders** and champions from **42 organisations** across the industry.

The summit launched the **Resource Hub, Support Line and Support Bot,** while also focusing on inclusive leadership, allyship and active bystanding. Feedback showed **87% of attendees** rated the event valuable or extremely valuable.

Beyond the summit, Drinks United contributed to industry panels, workshops and events including:

- **London Wine Fair**
- **National Wine Careers Week**
- **Sustainability in Drinks**
- **Bar Convent London**
- **Partner-led inclusion and events on safety across the sector.**

These engagements helped broaden awareness, strengthen partnerships, and position safety at work and inclusion as shared industry priorities rather than isolated organisational issues.

Voices from our network

"Supporting Drinks United was a clear way to be involved, especially because it is spearheaded by the cornerstone organisations of the wine trade. These bodies give this work momentum, and the framework, to make a wider and lasting difference."

Regine Lee, Managing Director, Indigo Wine

"The Vintners Company and its members are delighted to support the Drinks United initiative, and we are very happy to see the progress that has been made in this important area."

Ian Harris, Master, The Worshipful Company of Vintners

"The drinks industry is built on connection and community, yet it also faces unique safety challenges. Supporting Drinks United felt like a meaningful way to contribute to sectorwide change. Their collaborative approach resonated with us and real progress happens when organisations and people work together rather than in isolation."

Vicky Inglis, Head of People, VCT Europe

"We joined Drinks United because we want to be part of the solution, not just someone watching from the sidelines. It's about making sure our trade is a modern, respectful place to work so we don't lose incredible talent to other industries just because they don't feel they fit the traditional mold."

Kim Wilson, Managing Director, North South Wines

What Comes Next

Priorities for Phase 2

Phase 2 shifts the focus from building foundations to delivering real, measurable change — helping employers across the whole UK drinks sector take practical action on safety at work, inclusion, and workplace culture.

The Resource Hub, Support Line and Support Bot are all live. The industry now has a trusted platform — and the data to show where action is needed most.

01 Put practical tools in every employer's hands

We will give organisations of every size — especially SMEs — simple, free, industry-specific tools to assess where they stand, improve safer workplaces practice, and build more inclusive workplaces. No jargon.

02 Turn leadership commitment into action

Good intentions are not enough. We will work directly with senior leaders to translate their commitment to DEI into visible, accountable behaviour — through roundtables, a leadership commitment framework, and peer-to-peer learning.

03 Reach the whole sector, not just the wine trade

Beer, cider, spirits, RTD, on-trade — the whole drinks industry faces these challenges. Phase 2 will broaden our reach and ensure that Drinks United is genuinely relevant and accessible to every corner of the sector.

04 Measure and prove the difference we make

We will repeat the industry survey, publish a progress report, and benchmark change over time — giving employers, funders, and partners clear evidence that coordinated action is working and the industry is moving in the right direction.

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS

Who We Are

The Drinks United Board

Michelle Brampton
CEO, WSET

Lulie Halstead
Founder, Wine Intelligence
Trustee, WSET

Miles Beale
CEO, WSTA

Nicky Forrest
Managing Director, Phipps
Trustee, WSTA

Nicola Burnston
CEO, The Drinks Trust

Laura Willoughby
Founder, Club Soda
Trustee, The Drinks Trust

Laura Aiken
Programme Manager

Lara Sills
Operations Director
Trustee, WSTA

Our Current Advisory Council

- Ahsoka Wallace, Around Bar
- Alya Lilani, Culture Consultant
- Anjali Douglas, WSET
- Becky Paskin, Our Whisky Foundation
- Bryonie Grieveson, Armit Wines
- Charlotte Barker, Diageo
- Charlotte Waring, Bordeaux Index
- David Shearsby, Hallgarten & Novum
- Emma Hodges, Inclusion Consultant
- Gary Keller, Refresco
- James Simpson, Pol Roger
- Paddy Gardiner, Boutinot
- 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 Instagram and LinkedIn.

Adopt and share our safety at work standards, promote reporting channels, and talk about us with people in the industry.

Become a partner: Support us with a donation, or contribute tools, resources or expertise.

Contact Us

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drinksunited.co.uk

linkedin.com/company/drinks-united