

# **RIBA Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

## **Audit**

**Victoria Dale**

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**ewgroup**





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## Executive Summary

Overall, there is a strong desire to become a more diverse and inclusive membership organisation both internally and externally. The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) has taken significant strides to progress its inclusion journey.

It is clear from the desk review and qualitative research that there is a clear recognition of the importance of diversity and inclusion in the work of RIBA, the profession, and the sector as a whole to make the built environment more inclusive to benefit everyone.

The audit highlighted several areas of strength:

- Roll out of Cultural Intelligence training has encouraged conversations on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I), improved awareness of its impact on their work and increased dialogue on the topic amongst some senior Managers.
- The creation of Community Groups has provided a forum for different underrepresented groups to share experiences, raise awareness and shape policies and practices.
- Due to the work of the Enable Communities Group, there has been increased confidence in staff to report having a long-term health condition.
- The creation of an ED&I Director role has encouraged more conversations and actions to improve ED&I at RIBA.

However, there are a number of areas for further development and improvement that the audit has identified and are discussed in detail in the report. Here are the top five recommendations:

1. Board to regularly communicate their ongoing commitment to EDI across RIBA recognising the narrative will need to change and develop over time.
2. Leadership Team to reflect on the audit findings and recommendations and demonstrate their commitment to ED&I, reinforced by an action plan, set of metrics and allocated budget and resources to drive the agenda forward. This should be aligned with the revised organisational structure.
3. Provide training for all employees on the Equality Act 2010, bullying and harassment, microaggressions and practical strategies for building inclusion into their day-to-day roles.
4. Leaders and Managers to receive training on inclusive leadership, inclusive recruitment, allyship, facilitating conversations with team members on their experiences in the workplace with a focus on anti-racism, how to encourage a speak-up culture, managing difficult conversations and training on key people policies.





5. Leadership Team and Managers to act as role models, lead by example and build on existing good practice through making ED&I a regular stand-alone item in all team meetings (e.g. updates on progress against the organisation's ED&I commitments, any upcoming events in the Diversity Calendar like Pride, etc), challenging and calling out inappropriate language and bias, and actively seeking and taking on board the views of employees on their experiences in the workplace and ideas for how things could be improved.





## Introduction

The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) is a global professional membership organisation whose purpose is to drive excellence in architecture and serve its members and society to deliver better buildings and places, stronger communities and a sustainable environment. Being inclusive is one of the key principles that underpins all of its work.

The business case for a more diverse, equitable and inclusive workplace is well evidenced.

- Inclusive teams outperform their peers by 80% in team-based assessments. (Deloitte, 2013)
- Gender-diverse companies are 15% more likely to outperform their peers and ethnically diverse companies are 35% more likely to do the same. (McKinsey, 2015)
- 73% of employers believe diversity encourages creative and innovative thinking. (Robert Walters, 2018)
- More diverse teams are as much as 158% more likely to have a better understanding of their customers. (Center for Talent Innovation, 2013)
- Inclusive teams make better decisions up to 87% of the time. (Forbes, 2017)
- More than half (58%) of professionals look for an organisation's diversity and inclusion policies when researching a potential new employer. (Hays Diversity & Inclusion 2019 report)

It, therefore, makes sense that having a more diverse and inclusive workplace benefits the communities and societies that RIBA and its members serve.

Despite progress to improve diversity within the profession, the sector still faces challenges in attracting more racially diverse talent. According to the latest available data (dates 5<sup>th</sup> December 2022) from the Architects Registration Board UK, the profession is predominantly White (82%) whilst only 1% of architects are Black/Black British, 7% Asian/Asian British, 2% Mixed heritage and 1% any other ethnic background. (Architects Registration Board <https://arb.org.uk/about-arb/equality-diversity/data/>)

For the sector to move forward, it is imperative that RIBA acts as a role model and leads the way in attracting, retaining and developing diverse talent and building a more inclusive workplace culture.

RIBA is committed to making the sector and the wider construction industry more representative of the communities and societies it serves. In their Inclusion Transparency Report 2021/22, RIBA sets out its vision to “create a culturally intelligent and inclusive organisation and architecture profession through a systemic change of policies processes, and by equipping individuals and teams to develop inclusive behaviours”. The report identifies 5 key priority areas:





1. Embedding cultural intelligence in all of its ED&I work.
2. Fostering understanding through developing quantitative and qualitative data collection strategies to drive meaningful change.
3. Reviewing and updating policies and processes, especially those which inform attraction and recruitment and development of talent and skills.
4. Developing talent and skills of staff to learn and apply more culturally intelligent and inclusive behaviours and embed inclusivity into all actions and programmes.
5. Role model inclusive behaviours to implement change within the profession, construction industry and society.







# Purpose and Methodology

## Objectives of the Audit

The purpose of this ED&I Audit was to provide an independent assessment of the RIBA's current position, strengths and areas for improvement including the effectiveness of existing initiatives that support the organisation's inclusion journey.

## Methodology

The Audit involved a desk review of key people policies and processes, employee diversity monitoring data, latest employee survey findings, ED&I related training material and information about the employee resource groups, as well as a review of the latest Inclusion Transparency Report and RIBA's website.

Focus groups and 1-to-1 interviews were carried out with a cross-section of employees from Senior Managers to more junior roles including some recent hires as well as Board members. The purpose of these conversations was to gather their insights and experiences of working at RIBA. A total of 27 people took part in the qualitative research. This includes those who self-nominated for the focus groups/interviews but were unable to attend and were given the option of providing feedback via email.





## Key Findings, Themes and Insights

Overall, RIBA's inclusion journey over the past five years has been largely focused on external work with its members through raising awareness, guidance, campaigns, events and programmes designed to improve diversity and inclusion within the sector. It has only been in the last couple of years that the focus has shifted to ED&I internally at RIBA. Key steps taken to address inclusion internally include the:

- Appointment of RIBA's first Director of Inclusion and Diversity in February 2021.
- Roll out of Cultural Intelligence (CQ) training in June 2021 to Board, Council, Executive Team and Senior Managers.
- Launch of the six RIBA Community Groups for staff: Balance (Gender), Origins (Race), Enable (Disability), Generations (Intergenerational/Age), RIBA LGBTQ+, RAISED (Social Mobility) and more recently, the creation of an ED&I Steering Group.
- Signing up to the Halo Code to protect against racial discrimination.

However, the departure of the Director of Inclusion and Diversity in June 2022 and significant staff turnover has meant some of the momentum has been lost and progress, to some degree, has been stalled. This will inevitably have resulted in the loss of valuable knowledge, insights and expertise to support the work of RIBA to move the ED&I agenda forward. However, a new Director of Inclusion and Diversity has recently been appointed.

The newly formed Board and the arrival of a new CEO in January 2023 present an exciting opportunity for the organisation to reflect on the audit findings, progress to date and to use the recommendations as a basis for resetting the direction and vision.

## Values and Objectives

### Strengths

The organisation's current values are:

1. **Connect:** actively listen to understand; be kind and caring and seek and value others' views
2. **Respect:** be truthful and clear, say "thank you" and say "I am sorry"
3. **Energy:** be creative and take risks, do what you say you will and have fun and smile

The first two values, Connect and Respect, are critical to accelerating RIBA's inclusion journey and provide some of the key ingredients for what an inclusive workplace should look, sound and feel like in practice. The third value, Energy, is







also important. To live this as an organisation, diversity of background is required, as well as perspectives and a culture where employees feel safe to take risks.

### Areas for Improvement

Feedback from the focus groups and interviews suggests that these values are not properly embedded in the organisation:

*“Don’t feel like the organisation’s values we have are demonstrated.”*

Indeed, the most recent Employee Engagement Survey indicates that only a third (33%) agree “The RIBA’s core values – Connect, Respect, Energy – are embedded within the organisation”.

For organisational values to be lived and applied in the workplace, they need to be supported by action, metrics and embedded in desired behaviours and decision-making.

To be effective and drive change, values need to be embedded into ways of working and across key people policies and practices including hiring, performance management, onboarding and learning and development.

Leadership, it is critical to continue to communicate the top-level commitment to make progress toward a more diverse and inclusive workplace culture.

In order to demonstrate top-level commitment this requires:

- Having a clear statement on the importance of ED&I to RIBA.
- Leaders being able to articulate why it matters to the organisation based on business, legal and moral cases.
- Having an adopted ED&I strategy with clear goals/targets, actions and progress regularly reviewed.
- ED&I to be regularly discussed at Executive Team meetings.
- Leaders to communicate regularly about ED&I, supporting others to see how it helps to achieve the organisation’s wider strategy.

### Areas for Improvement

The organisation published an ED&I Action Plan in June 2021 under the previous ED&I Director, however, it is not clear if there was an overarching strategy to support its implementation, or how progress was measured and regularly reported to Board and Leadership Team.

Feedback from the interviews and focus groups suggests that there is a need for greater transparency, direction and communication from the top. According to the most recent Employee Engagement survey, only one-third (33%) believe their Executive Team provides a clear vision of the overall direction of RIBA. There have been significant changes to the Executive team over the last 12 months with a new team recently put in place.





The audit is taking place at a critical time with a new CEO taking up appointment in January 2023. It is therefore important that Leaders use this as an opportunity to reflect on the audit findings and recommendations, set the direction and regularly articulate a clear commitment to what ED&I specifically means for the RIBA.

Moreover, this needs to be supported by specific goals, metrics and actions supported by robust governance and accountability structures to ensure regular monitoring and reporting of progress against its ED&I commitments.

## **Workplace Culture**

### Strengths

*Welcoming, friendly and open* are some of the words used by interview and focus group participants to describe the culture at RIBA. However, there were mixed views on the culture depending on people's different experiences, how long they have been at RIBA, and how they have been impacted by the transformation programme.

A general observation from discussions is that RIBA employees are passionate about what they do.

Some participants spoke about feeling supported by their line manager in terms of flexibility around caring needs, health conditions and being open when it comes to a work or personal-related problem/emergency. This was also the case for some participants when asked about their experiences during Covid and lockdowns, with Managers providing regular check-ins and more frequent communication.

### Areas for Improvement

The general consensus among participants was the significant impact the transformation programme has had on staff morale and the culture. The loss of staff due to restructuring has partly resulted in staff feeling, "overstretched" "overworked" and "demoralised" with some citing examples of employees covering additional responsibilities as a result of the departure of a team member. This may impact the desire and motivation of employees to change working practices and behaviours. Unconscious bias tends to arise when staff are under pressure, tired or stressed and is a major barrier to building more inclusive cultures at work.

Banter, inappropriate language and bullying were raised as issues that staff have experienced from Managers, Board members and RIBA members. People reported these issues not being dealt with properly in some instances. Examples referenced were in relation to the experience of female, minority ethnic and LGBTQ staff. There is a feeling of things being "brushed under the carpet".

*"The culture is not good at managing difficult conversations. This results in people leaving."*

It is clear from discussions that microaggressions in the workplace are an issue and need addressing. This requires staff to feel confident to challenge non-inclusive





behaviours and Managers and Leaders to be equipped with the awareness and tools for managing these issues appropriately and confidently.

Institutional racism was raised on several occasions in relation to how RIBA may be perceived following a complaint by a Council member in 2015.

Conversations on what is institutional racism and its impact on employees need to be encouraged to raise awareness and confidence in talking about racism as an issue that affects RIBA, the profession and society. Board, Leaders, Managers and employees all have a role in addressing inappropriate behaviours within the workplace and influencing change within the Architectural profession.

## **Employee Engagement**

### Strengths

It is clear from the qualitative research and desk review that there have been ongoing conversations and awareness raising on a range of ED&I topics following the appointment of an ED&I Director both internally and with members.

The organisation has hosted various lunch and learns and celebrated key events in the Diversity Calendar such as Pride, Black History Month and International Woman's Day for staff and members.

The recently formed ED&I Steering Group has a representative from the Communications team. This has helped to support the work of RIBA with planning events coming up including staff workshops as part of Black History Month.

Qualitative research findings suggest that discussions around race and racism have been led by staff. The murder of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter protests across the world had prompted discussions in the workplace. In response, two Black colleagues co-hosted a session for staff called "In my shoes". It was a very well received event and encouraged a lot of open discussion around race and racism.

### **Employee Engagement Survey**

In 2020, the organisation carried out an Employee Engagement Survey which included a number of indicators that measured RIBA's commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in the workplace. The survey results indicate that people are proud to work for RIBA (94%), are treated fairly and with respect by their line manager (85%) and are able to strike the right balance between work and home life (73%).

These indicators provide some of the critical foundations for building an inclusive workplace culture.

### **Community Groups**

In July 2021, the organisation launched six Community Groups: Balance (Gender), Origins (Race), Enable (Disability), Generations (intergenerational/age), RIBA LGBTQ+, and RAISED (Social Mobility). Their purpose is to "allow for our workforce







to have a voice, raise issues and concerns, share their thoughts and lived experiences in a safe, confidential space, amplifying the voices of those not being heard and ensure real change happens, creating an inclusive culture, where people feel able to share their thoughts and ideas”.

Following a review of the Community Groups, these were reduced to four. Given the size of the organisation, it was agreed this was more manageable. More recently an ED&I Steering Group was set up to link to the four Community Groups and encourage more collaborative working.

Each Community Group has sponsorship from an Executive Team member. This is important to ensure the work of each Group feeds up to senior management.

The work of the Community Groups was mentioned on numerous occasions during focus groups and interview discussions when asked what RIBA is doing well on ED&I. Examples of their work included shaping policies and guidance in the workplace and hosting sessions on a range of ED&I topics including unconscious bias. The Enable Community Group was referenced on several occasions as being quite active including improving disability self-declaration rates amongst staff.

#### Areas for improvement

Whilst there have been conversations on a range of topics, some participants spoke of a culture of being too afraid to speak up and not being heard. Building a more inclusive culture requires the creation of safe spaces to allow employees to share their experiences and views and experiences. This is key to equipping Leaders and Managers with the knowledge and confidence to challenge and speak up when they hear/see inappropriate behaviour/language. To inform this, there should be a clear steer from the Leadership Team around what constitutes inappropriate behaviour and language.

With the departure of the ED&I Director, some participants commented that this meant fewer conversations when asked how often ED&I is communicated in the workplace.

In light of the issues highlighted earlier on racial microaggressions, it is important to accept the lived experience of Black and minority ethnic staff and determine how employees will demonstrate allyship e.g. creating safe spaces where people can share their lived experience and what they would like to see change in response to this. Furthermore, it is equally important to recognise the trauma and triggers associated with racism and respond with empathy. Whilst the Community Groups serve as a safe space for different underrepresented groups in the workplace, the overall impression from the focus groups and interviews suggests this has not been fully realised.

For some, there is a feeling that ED&I has been treated like a tick-box exercise and action so far has been more surface-level.

*“Feels like it’s being a bit window dressing.”*





## Employee Engagement Survey

The Employee Engagement Survey 2020 highlighted some areas of concern, particularly around Leadership direction, visibility and approachability, accountability, communication, pay and reward and fairness and respect:

- Just over half (52%) believe the RIBA ensures that all staff are treated fairly and equally.
- 42% believe Senior Leaders at the RIBA are visible and approachable.
- Only a quarter (25%) believe that communications are good between different departments.
- Around a third (34%) get the training and development they need to do their job.
- 64% of respondents feel that bullying, harassment and discrimination are not tolerated at the RIBA.
- 26% feel their career development aspirations are being met at RIBA.
- Only 13% believe their rewards are linked to their performance and contribution.
- 34% feel their pay fairly reflects their duties and responsibilities

Whilst the Employee Engagement Survey was run almost three years ago, the areas for concern listed above largely mirror the issues raised in the focus groups and interviews especially around:

- Lack of learning and development opportunities,
- How bullying and harassment are dealt with, and;
- Lack of leadership, direction and poor communication.

A key theme during discussions was the existence of silo working and the lack of collaboration between teams. This can potentially impact efforts to build more inclusive workplace cultures and a sense of belonging at the macro and micro levels. For example, competitive teams might be focusing on achieving goals and targets and not how these are achieved i.e. by working collaboratively with resultant micro aggressions possibly between teams and individuals.

There are several other ED&I-related indicators that RIBA may want to use in the next survey as a way of measuring the impact of its actions to build a more inclusive culture. Key indicators include:

- Senior management understand that Equity, Diversity and Inclusion are critical to our future success.
- The Board of Trustees understand that Equity, Diversity and inclusion are critical to our future success.





- I believe that I have not been treated differently at work because of my personal characteristics and/or identity.
- This company proactively recruits people with a variety of protected characteristics.
- I believe this organisation would take appropriate action if an instance of harassment or discrimination was reported.
- I feel comfortable speaking up in the moment, if I see employees being treated unfairly/ not being treated with dignity and respect.

Action must be taken as a result of concerns raised in future surveys to build trust and encourage confidence amongst employees that their views are being heard and acted on.

### **Community Groups**

A key issue raised during the focus group and interview discussions was that due to restructuring, there has not been as much focus or progress made by the Communities Groups. This is due to the loss of staff and less focus on people-centred activities. There was also a few observations made that the work of the Groups feels “surface level” and it “has got no legs”.

It is unclear if all groups have a terms of reference. Having a clear purpose and objectives and understanding the scope of each Group's work is critical for the RIBA to make any progress and help shape people policies and practices. According to research on staff networks, there are some common traits of what makes an effective network: providing a safe space, raising awareness of ED&I issues across the organisation and providing a collective voice for the workforce to management.

It is clear that the Groups have tried to shape policies such as the Menopause Guidance and the Hybrid Working Guidance. However, in the absence of clear terms of reference and a structured programme of activities, their influence becomes limited.

### **Policies and Processes**

#### Strengths

The organisation has a robust set of people policies that sets out its statutory rights and responsibilities of the employer and employees in the workplace including policies on bullying and harassment, ED&I, maternity/paternity/shared parental/adoption leave, flexible working and hybrid working. It is clear from reviewing the people policies that some have been revised with an EDI focus and as a result of the shift to hybrid working. To ensure consistency in messaging and to reflect the travel of direction, it is important that all people policies are reviewed and aligned to RIBA's ED&I vision going forward.







## **Inclusion and Diversity and Dignity at Work Policies**

The Inclusion and Diversity Policy sets out its commitment to promoting equality, eliminating discrimination and ensuring everyone is treated with dignity and respect. The Policy outlines its commitment to providing training, awareness and education on ED&I topics, regular monitoring of employment policies and practices, dealing with any breaches of the policy and embedding diversity and inclusion into all its activities.

The Dignity at Work Policy outlines its commitment to a workplace that is free from bullying and harassment and steps taken to address any incidents. This includes a definition of what harassment and bullying are with specific examples of what that looks like across different protected characteristics.

The organisation has signed up to the Halo Code as part of its commitment to a workplace free from bullying and harassment. The Code protects employees who come to work with natural hair and protective hairstyles associated with their racial, ethnic, and cultural identities.

By signing up to the Code, employers agree to communicate it to all employees, publish it on their website and office, embed the Code within existing dress code policy and future staff handbook, signpost staff to additional resources on the Halo Collective website and refer to the Code for guidance if a dispute arises.

## **Hybrid Working**

In light of the shift to hybrid working post-lockdown restrictions, RIBA has produced a Hybrid Working Guidance for employees and Managers. This was co-developed with HR, Community Groups and key stakeholders and is a good practice example of employee involvement in shaping people policies.

The guidance suggests a very flexible and adaptable approach to hybrid working by focusing on the individual and recognising how each person's circumstances are different. There are no fixed office days for the workforce and the decision on when to come in is largely down to the manager and the employee. Furthermore, the guidance acknowledges that not all employees want to be working from home and may find it difficult. This shows consideration for employees from different backgrounds, working preferences and those with neurodivergent conditions.

To support employees experiencing menopause, the organisation formed a partnership with Henpeck, a national menopause organisation, to produce a set of guidelines to help employees and Managers understand the key facts about menopause and how they can support those around them. As part of raising awareness RIBA hosted a series of online conversations for members and its own employees on menopause, discussing the symptoms, available support, and stigma. The guidance for Managers provides useful advice, key questions to ask and a practical checklist of key points to consider to support a colleague.





## Areas for Improvement

### **Inclusion and Diversity and Dignity at Work Policies**

To ensure the Inclusion and Diversity Policy is understood, objectives met and regularly reviewed, it is important to set out the specific responsibilities of employees, Managers, the Leadership Team and HR.

It is also important to include details on how the policy will be communicated to employees i.e. via onboarding and induction, training, staff newsletters etc.

The protected characteristic “pregnancy and maternity” needs to be added to the Policy.

It is also good practice to briefly outline the employer’s commitment to providing reasonable adjustments at every stage of the employee journey from application to interview to onboarding and beyond. This should include practical examples of how this will be met.

Whilst the Halo Code has been incorporated into the Dignity at Work Policy and details published on the RIBA website, it is not clear how the Code has been communicated to Managers and staff. So the Code is understood and applied, it is imperative that any future ED&I and management/leadership training covers the Code and how this applies in practice.

To embed the Menopause guidance, it is important to ensure Managers receive menopause awareness training on how best to support a team member and how to put this helpful guidance into practice.

### **Family Friendly Policies**

Whilst the policies on parental leave offers enhanced parental/maternity/SPL/adoption pay, there is no reference to individuals who may be undergoing IVF or surrogacy, what they are entitled to and how they will be supported in the workplace. Guidance on rights and responsibilities to support expectant and new parents appears to place more onus on the individual rather than requiring the manager to take a proactive approach to schedule regular check-ins, hold early conversations and support a phased return to work.

Regular conversations before going on maternity/paternity/adoption leave are essential in terms of checking in with the employee, how they are feeling, discussing any adjustments that might need to be made including where the employee is experiencing severe morning sickness, keeping in touch, and also their return to work.

In light of RIBA’s plans to review its family-friendly policies later this year, it provides an ideal opportunity to review these policies to ensure they are gender-neutral and acknowledge the rights of employees in same-sex relationships.

Whilst the guidance is really useful, Managers would benefit from some general awareness and training on supporting employees to create a more inclusive hybrid





working culture. The guidance should also include a prompt for Managers to discuss and agree on any reasonable adjustments with their team members.

Feedback from the focus groups and interviews highlighted the downside of hybrid working with less opportunity to collaborate and meet in person. This is likely to adversely affect new joiners and less experienced employees who might benefit from impromptu conversations with more experienced staff. .

When Managers are able to use their discretion, there is an opportunity for bias to influence local decisions. The hybrid policy would benefit from guidance to provide a framework for a level of consistency.

## **Workforce Diversity Data**

### Strengths

The total headcount at RIBA is 251 employees. The majority of the workforce is female (62%), vs. male (38%). This is higher when compared to the profession which is predominantly male (69%) vs. female (31%). Over three-quarters of the workforce is British White (77.3%) and around 1 in 5 (20%) are of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic background.

There is a relatively equal spread across different age groups, although a smaller proportion is aged over 55 years. The majority of the workforce is between the ages of 25 to 49 years old (69%).

With regards to disability, the organisation uses two categories to record this data: 1. the legal definition under the Equality Act 2010 and 2. if they have a long-term health condition.

According to the latest data, more employees identify as having a long-term health condition than a disability (11% vs. 4%). This might suggest a lack of awareness of what is covered under the Equality Act 2010 as a disability and the potential stigma around it. At the same time, individuals are confident to report having a long-term health condition which is encouraging and partly attributable to the work of the Enable Group. A third of respondents to the question on long-term health conditions did not respond to the question therefore the figure could be higher.

At present the organisation collects data on the following categories based on a Census survey for ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion/belief and also includes data on the percentage who attended university.

### Areas for Improvement

The organisation does not collect diversity data across key employee touchpoints e.g. recruitment, promotions or access to learning and development. Therefore the audit is unable to identify any patterns or trends by different groups e.g. where some employee groups may be overlooked for promotion or career development opportunities, etc. There are plans to introduce a new HR system in 2024 to track this data.







In order to measure progress against RIBA's ED&I commitments, it is important to put in place mechanisms for recording, monitoring, analysing and reporting diversity data across key employee touchpoints. A starting point would be to gather data at the recruitment stage and then build on this as the new HR system is rolled out.

To build a more complete picture of the workforce, the organisation would benefit from collecting diversity data on other categories i.e. caring responsibilities and other socio-economic KPIs.

To provide a clear picture of the percentage of employees with a disability, it is important to use a single category for individuals to identify as having a disability. The organisation may wish to carry out some awareness raising on what is a disability, the support available and how to request it.

Lastly, but most importantly, to encourage disclosure of information, there needs to be a clear rationale for why the information is being collected, how it will be stored and used and that this is communicated to employees before undertaking any diversity monitoring. Leaders and Managers must lead by example and promote the benefits of sharing personal information.

## **Learning and Development**

### Strengths

In June 2021, the organisation rolled out cultural intelligence (CQ) training to Board, Leaders and Managers as part of its commitment to embedding inclusion into behaviours, systems and policies. Cultural Intelligence is "the capability to work and relate effectively with those who are different from you. It's the behavioural framework that allows you to consciously create procedural changes, to mitigate the influence of hidden bias."

The training first involved a 360 evaluation questionnaire for each participant and up to 5 employees were invited to provide their assessment anonymously of the participant. Results are then shared with each participant and the CQ coach. This informs the foundation of each participant's journey and the improvements they need to make (self-discovery).

The approach to the training involved small groups who would meet regularly over a period of six weeks where they would receive coaching from a CQ coach.

Whilst there was no evaluation made available for this audit, feedback from focus groups and interview participants highlighted the positive impact of the training. It encouraged some Senior Leaders to be more engaged in dialogue on ED&I and some teams became more aware of ED&I issues, how it shapes their work and in general, encouraged more conversations.

Prior to June 2021, there has been some ED&I training as part of the induction for new starters. This covered the Equality Act 2010, bias and bullying and harassment. The organisation has also invested in upskilling a number of staff to be Mental





Health First Aid trainers. The group meet regularly and has been proactive in raising awareness and communication on Mental Health at work.

### Areas for Improvement

The restructuring has meant less capacity to deliver people-centric activities. This has especially impacted learning and development opportunities. Whilst the CQ training received positive feedback for some, others felt like it was “imposed” upon them, difficult to apply to their own area of work, and did not cover key issues like bullying and harassment.

It was also noted during discussions that line Managers do not receive training on key people policies. This can act as a barrier to ensuring what is written in policy is applied in practice and therefore relies on Managers’ own understanding of their responsibilities. Without proper training and awareness, this leaves the door open to bias and gives Managers a high degree of discretion as to how they apply the policies in practice which can lead to discrimination.

The staff induction process was mentioned on several occasions as an area of weakness. Previously, ED&I was covered as part of the induction but feedback from participants suggests this is no longer the case.

It is therefore essential moving forward that ED&I forms part of the induction for new starters.

Whilst cultural intelligence has its benefits, this is just one part of the inclusion jigsaw. In light of the key themes emerging from the focus groups and interviews and desk review, it is important that all employees receive training on the Equality Act 2010, bullying and harassment, microaggressions and inclusive cultures. Leaders and Managers should also receive training on inclusive leadership, allyship, how to encourage a speak-up culture, managing difficult conversations and training on key people policies.

### Performance Management

Performance reviews are carried out twice a year. A copy of the Individual Activity Plan Guidance notes for employees was provided as part of the desk review. The guidance is for employees to prepare for their 1-to-1s and performance reviews, how to set SMART objectives and what to expect from Managers including how feedback should be framed and how to give feedback when asked by Managers on their management style.

### **Areas for improvement**

More regular and frequent performance feedback reduces the risk of recency bias shaping performance reviews. It is important to encourage a two-way conversation when it comes to providing feedback and that Managers receive training on how to give effective feedback. The organisation may want to consider the use of 360 or multi-source feedback to ensure a fairer performance review process.





In addition, it is important that Leaders and Managers receive training on how to give effective feedback in light of issues raised in the focus groups and interviews.

## **Inclusive Recruitment**

### Strengths

The organisation has a comprehensive set of tools to support hiring managers at each stage of the process. It is clear from the desk review that RIBA is striving to maintain a fair, non-biased and consistent approach to recruitment.

### **Recruitment Guide**

Hiring managers are required to attend training and be supported and guided by HR to ensure a consistent approach and the policy requires hiring managers to ensure gender-diverse shortlisting and interview panels.

### **Job Adverts**

The Job Advert guidance for hiring managers provides a two-page summary providing points of consideration for ensuring a clear and structured job advert. It emphasises to hiring managers the need to highlight the culture, values and benefits of working at RIBA to attract talent, to include salary details and to keep the job description brief. This includes advising on the need to avoid biased language and an ED&I statement that hiring managers could use. By doing so it encourages hiring managers to consider the need to ensure more inclusive job adverts and descriptions.

### **Shortlisting and Interviewing**

Guidance on shortlisting provides advice on types of criteria to shortlist candidates against and to avoid non-essential criteria where certain qualifications are not essential to the role. It is clear that there is a commitment to ensure diversity at shortlisting and interview stages as set out in the Shortlisting and Interview Guides and to seek out feedback from other employees not immediately involved in the process. This encourages a broad range of perspectives thus helping to reduce bias.

A scoring matrix is also included which is positive as it suggests a structured approach to selection.

The Interview Guide is full of practical advice and tips for hiring managers on ensuring a fair, consistent and structured interview process. This includes ensuring gender diverse interview panel, types of questions and the importance of ensuring all candidates are asked the same questions. There is a useful section on discrimination at interviews, the definition of discrimination and examples of how this can play out at an interview. This includes what questions not to ask and information about disability discrimination.

As part of the desk review, we were provided with a library of interview questions. These competency-based questions cover a range of soft and technical skills and behaviours expected of different roles. The use of standardised questions can help







to reduce the impact of bias affecting the hiring process. This includes a number of questions about how they would encourage different perspectives and work in diverse teams.

### Areas for Improvement

#### **Routes to Market**

The main channels of recruitment are LinkedIn, the RIBA careers site, recruitment agencies (preferred supply list), Indeed, sector specific sites, and Hogan/Saville leadership styles. This could potentially limit the diversity of the talent pool. There are a range of non-traditional recruitment channels the charity may wish to consider in order to attract a more diverse pool of candidates including Working Mums and Dads, Timewise and BAME recruitment.

Feedback from the focus groups and interviews highlighted that applicants submit a CV. There is no application form. Some submit a CV with a cover letter whilst others don't.

#### **Employee Benefits**

The organisation offers a range of employee benefits that can provide a means of attracting and retaining people, supporting their wellbeing, and encouraging the required behaviours, achievements, values, and skills. RIBA offers various benefits including generous annual leave, discounts on food and drink, paid for subscriptions, cycle scheme and healthcare benefits. This is currently under review. In order to attract and retain diverse talent, it is important to offer benefits that take into consideration the needs of different groups. This could include, for example, offering flexible floating holidays to give employees the opportunity to celebrate and honour days that may be of particular importance to them or their religion, culture, or ethnic background. The organisation should also promote its four Community Groups on its careers site as a way of showing its commitment to supporting diverse groups.

#### **Recruitment Guide**

The recruitment guide should prompt hiring managers to check reasonable adjustments of applicants and candidates at each stage and to use positive action to address underrepresentation within the organisation.

Focus groups and interview discussions indicate that no recruitment training has taken place for a number of years. Reasons for this relate to the transformation programme. In the absence of regular recruitment training, this runs the risk of inconsistencies in recruitment and bias creeping into decision-making.

Before any interview, the panel should meet to agree on the set of questions to ask each candidate and scoring criteria including what a good answer to each question looks like and what a poor answer looks like. It is important to emphasise that interviewers should assign scores to each candidate before they discuss them as a group. This reduces the impact of bias influencing interviewers' views on a candidate because it requires them to score them independently before discussing their scores with the rest of the group.





Interview questions for management and leadership roles could benefit from including questions that evaluate a candidate's abilities to seek out different perspectives and role model inclusive behaviours. A key issue raised in the qualitative research was that Managers have discretion over what questions they use. Therefore there could be inconsistencies in the approach to interviewing that can lead to bias affecting key outcomes on the best candidate to hire.

Selection seems to be interview based. However, the organisation may wish to increase the number of skills-based assessments where relevant. Such assessments have been found to be better predictors of a candidate's ability to perform in the role than just relying on traditional methods.

Consider enhancing the ED&I statement as a way of taking positive action to address underrepresentation with something along the lines of *"we welcome applications, especially from XX who are currently underrepresented in our organisation and within the sector"*.





## Recommendations

A more diverse and inclusive workplace that encourages and supports diversity of background, perspectives and working styles will help RIBA to better meet the needs of its members and society. The following recommendations include both immediate actions and more long-term actions, some of which will require detailed discussion and consideration. It is of course for RIBA to decide how to take this work forward.

Theme	Recommendation
<b>Leadership</b>	<p><i>Immediate Measures:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Information sharing session to be held with Board to look in detail at this audit, as part of their support for ongoing EDI programme.</li><li>2. Leadership Team to reflect on the audit findings and recommendations and publish a strong written statement on their commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion reinforced by an action plan, set of metrics and allocated budget and resources to drive the agenda forward. This should be aligned with the revised organisational structure.</li><li>3. Revise and update the Member Staff protocol to be supported with training to help Board members understand their role in creating an inclusive culture.</li></ol> <p><i>Longer-term measures:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Leadership Team and Managers to use existing communication channels to lead on ED&amp;I discussions and promote the business, legal and moral case of a diverse and inclusive workplace and what this means.</li><li>2. Leadership Team and Managers to act as role models, lead by example, and build on existing good practice through making ED&amp;I a regular stand-alone item in all team meetings, challenging and calling out inappropriate language and bias and actively seeking and taking on board the views of employees on their experiences in the workplace and ideas for how things could be improved.</li></ol>
<b>Workforce Diversity Data</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Devise clear written communication for employees to explain the purpose, rationale and benefit of them sharing personal information and how it will be used and stored.</li></ol>





	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Consider using a single category for disability to ensure benchmarking against Census 2021 data and in line with the Equality Act 2010 definition.</li> <li>3. Enlist Leaders and Managers to be advocates of sharing personal information and encourage their team members to do the same.</li> </ol> <p><i>Longer-term measures:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Carry out an anonymous online survey of employees to gather data across the 9 protected characteristics and develop some metrics to monitor progress against the charity's ED&amp;I commitments. This could include Joiners and Leavers, Recruitment and Selection, Exits, Grievances and Disciplinarys and Promotions. This could coincide with the implementation of the new HR Information System.</li> </ol>
<b>Values and objectives</b>	<p><i>Longer-term measures:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Consider how Equality, Diversity and Inclusion could be further embedded into the 3 core values and what this means for Leaders, Managers and employees.</li> </ol>
<b>Policies and practices</b>	<p><i>Immediate Measures:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review and refresh key people policies in light of the audit. This should include family-friendly policies, Inclusion and Diversity Policy, Dignity at Work policy and Employee Benefits.</li> <li>2. Develop a resource hub (via staff intranet) with FAQs on employees' rights and responsibilities under employment legislation. Ensure Managers understand their responsibilities and know how to signpost team members to this resource.</li> <li>3. Develop a practical checklist for Managers about what they need to consider when supporting an expectant or new parent/adoptive parent including the need for regular check-ins and early conversations around returning to work.</li> </ol> <p><i>Longer term measure:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Consider developing a practical guide for Managers to reasonable adjustments in the workplace.</li> </ol>







<b>Inclusive Recruitment</b>	<p><i>Immediate measures:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Include a clear ED&amp;I commitment in every job advert with a key message that RIBA welcomes applicants from ethnic minority backgrounds, women and disabled people who are currently underrepresented in certain roles, or similar.</li><li>2. Include a clear statement on reasonable adjustments in every job advert asking applicants to advise the recruiter if they have any adjustment needs.</li><li>3. Provide a list of examples of biased language via the Job Advert Guide to give hiring Managers more of an idea of certain words that could deter particular groups from applying.</li></ol> <p><i>Longer term measure:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Review all job adverts and specifications for biased language and consider using bias decoders to ensure wording does not deter certain groups from applying.</li><li>2. Conduct a deep-dive review of the recruitment and selection process to identify where bias may be impacting hiring decisions.</li></ol>
<b>Learning and Development</b>	<p><i>Immediate Measures:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Provide training for all employees on the Equality Act 2010, bullying and harassment, microaggressions and practical strategies for building inclusion into their day-to-day roles.</li><li>2. Leaders and Managers to receive training on inclusive leadership, allyship, facilitating conversations with team members on their experiences in the workplace with a focus on anti-racism, how to encourage a speak-up culture, managing difficult conversations and training on key people policies.</li><li>3. Build ED&amp;I into the induction and onboarding process.</li><li>4. Training and ongoing awareness raising for Managers on how to support an inclusive hybrid working culture through providing guidance, training and/or as part of future leadership management training.</li></ol>





**Employee engagement and communication**

*Immediate Measures:*

1. Develop more specific and wider-ranging ED&I related questions in future Employee Engagement Surveys.
2. Facilitate a session with Chairs and members of Communities Groups to prioritise areas and scope of work, formalise roles and responsibilities and agree on terms of reference. This should be aligned with any future ED&I strategy.
3. Storytelling – Leaders and Managers to host open conversations with employees and via the Communities Groups on challenges in the workplace to build a better understanding.

