

IWFM Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Statement – making EDI count for the future

In 2021 IWFM made a public commitment to drive forward equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI). Questions raised by the BlackLivesMatter and MeToo movements showed us that we had no clear answer to the question of how to make the workplace and facilities (FM) profession more diverse, and with that, more inclusive.

Understanding through collaboration

Not being the only institution asking itself this question we embarked on a research journey to understand how we could make a difference, with 12 professional membership and regulatory bodies, representing three quarters of a million UK workers.

Inclusion in the workplace is a basic requirement for the growth, progress and success of organisations in today's interconnected and diverse world. The workplace and facilities 'lynchpin' profession knows this well.

The resulting report, [*Beyond Buzzwords*](#), by the Young Foundation, whose recommendations we accept, highlighted the critical role we must play as change agent, using our influence to drive systemic change in the wider business community. Building on a large body of evidence, the research reinforces the importance of EDI and its positive benefits for individuals, organisations, professions and the economy.

EDI simply being on the agenda is not enough

However, negative experiences remain widespread across the professions: 72% of those surveyed experienced discriminatory behaviour in the workplace; negative experience is more common among those with more 'marginalised characteristics'; and a growing cynicism around the effectiveness of EDI efforts is recorded.

We must do better and, whatever we do, we must clearly show we are making a difference.

Compared to the other professions in the survey, the FM specific findings make uncomfortable reading. Together, the report and the IWFM case study data give a stark warning of the consequences for this community of not acting:

- People in FM experience more severe discrimination and exclusion.
- The impact in FM is more severe, causing higher levels of friction in the labour market as more facilities professionals change jobs, take career breaks, choose self-employment, experience mental health issues and turn down professional opportunities: they are more likely to exit FM because of issues related to EDI.
- Perceptions of EDI differ greatly with participants from marginalised groups less likely to agree on progress around gender, sexuality and ethnic diversity. This matters because while the FM frontline today is more diverse than, say, office-based or more senior roles, progression will - at best - be hampered if negative perceptions persist.

These factors are aggravating a major skills crisis in a critical profession: the FM skills gap is a factor of perennial pessimism in our Market Outlook research; to say nothing of innovation, plurality of thought and business success all being starved as a result. Doing nothing is not an option if we are to avoid a further drain on the profession.

The only way to guarantee that FM can attract and retain the best possible talent is ensure that equal opportunity exists for all those who may want to enter, or are already in, FM and to celebrate their differences so they may thrive.

Where next?

IWFM commits to adopt (or further implement where progress has begun) all of the Young Foundation recommendations for professional bodies. They are our blueprint for how we drive change in the short, medium and longer term across our themes of leadership and governance, IWFM team, membership and professions.

Specifically,

1. Put EDI at the heart of what it means to be a professional by committing to:
 - a. updating codes of conduct with corresponding reviews of professional standards, to embed EDI principles in the core meaning of what it means to be a professional.
 - b. reframing EDI as non-negotiable and integral to all decision-making.
2. Set higher standards for professionals by committing to:
 - a. embedding EDI across all learning and development opportunities.
 - b. ensuring members are not granted with the highest levels of chartership or accreditation without core competencies around EDI.
3. Actively involve professionals in change by providing meaningful opportunities for members, learners and employers to shape action around EDI in our profession – including:
 - a. creating working groups for professionals to be involved in reviewing key actions (IWFM will continue to draw on the experience and expertise of our existing EDI Focus Group).
 - b. ensuring accountability mechanisms through which professionals' feedback about activities, and communications is acted upon.
4. Become role models for good practice by:
 - a. ensuring all strategies, policies, procedures and practices are approached with an EDI lens.
 - b. continuously monitoring progress.

Achieving systemic change demands multi-stakeholder commitments, so the report includes further recommendations for policymakers, employers and individual professionals.

It is on us to support this further through various routes, underpinned by a clear action plan for which we are accountable to the Board.

We can only control what is within our sphere of influence, but through our members, our ambition is to help make a difference in the world they operate, work, live and love.