Frequently asked questions – *Beyond Buzzwords* and IWFM

Why did we get involved with this research?

We got involved with the Young Foundation research for three key reasons since embarking on our own equity, diversity and inclusion journey in 2021.

Firstly, we know that workplace and facilities management (FM) has a people problem: with that we mean that it both has a skills and talent gap, while at the same time its people profile isn't very diverse. Across the sector, the front line can show great diversity, while in other areas, even at front line level, it is really lacking; and where we see diversity in the frontline, it is underrepresented in management. In short, we have barriers both to entry and to progression across our profession and membership.

Secondly, we wanted to understand better how as a professional body we could make the biggest impact possible for a fairer future for all. Given IWFM's position, how can we drive meaningful change, eliminating barriers and creating equitable opportunity for all? Our initial journey showed that lots can be done, but what activity actually makes an impact? Where should we optimise our strength *as a professional body*?

Thirdly, the collaboration provided us with an opportunity to be part of something that we could not achieve on our own. The project attracted 7,290 survey responses (185 IWFM respondents) and was a fabulous opportunity to understand what good looks like and how we compare to other professions in the war for talent.

Why do we need to act?

First and foremost, it is the right thing to do. Equality of opportunity for all to thrive in the workplace should be a given.

While FM is a great profession with a point of entry from many different routes and levels, the harsh reality, evidenced by its current profile, is that it is not diverse. In large-scale member research conducted by IWFM in 2020, 65% of respondents were aged over 45, 88% of respondents are white, 5% are Asian or Asian British, 3% are black and 2% are from multiple ethnic backgrounds, and only 26% are female[1].

The research is clear about the stakes - many professionals consider leaving their profession and/or organisation because of issues related to exclusion, harassment or discrimination. If we do not act, the FM profession will diminish at the precise moment its expertise and competence is most needed for people, planet and profit.

Inclusion in the workplace is important for all. It is a fundamental necessity for the growth, progress and success of organisations in today's interconnected and diverse world. FM, more than any other profession, should understand the importance of this because of its lynchpin role in organisations.

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[1] Impact and Experience Survey 2020

Why do professional bodies play a crucial role?

Professional bodies hold a key lever for positive action and lasting change. They *set the standards* of what it means to be a professional. The research concludes they have the capacity to 'raise the bar' for what it means to be a professional, in relation to the values of equality, diversity and inclusion.

Professional bodies play a pivotal role as part of the wider system with employers, individual professionals and policy makers. As part of the wider systems, employers *operationalise these standards* in hiring and promotion decisions, and across its policies and practices. Professionals *enact these standards* to foster more inclusive cultures.

What were the key findings of the research?

- Three in four of the total sample of professionals surveyed report experiencing barriers to progression in their career (73%) or 'discriminatory or exclusionary' behaviour in the workplace (72%)
- Negative experiences are more common among those with a higher number of more 'marginalised characteristics' – belief in meritocracy reduces as people's number of marginalised characteristics increases
- The testimonies of professionals show how experiences of marginalisation are lived in variable and complex ways on an everyday basis – so there is no one size fits all solution
- Equality, diversity and inclusion must be guiding principles for all decision making - not just for specific initiatives
- EDI interventions must focus on changing the systems that underpin marginalisation. We all have a role to play - professional bodies, individuals, employers and policy makers

How did the Workplace and Facilities Management profession fare against the majority of other bodies in the collaborative?

- EDI is on the agenda. Participating members pointed to relatively more progress than average by their companies on things like EDI training for managers, unconscious bias training for all staff and EDI training for new staff, but more work is needed as significant barriers remain
- More severe discrimination and exclusion is experienced in FM than other professions: across language, harassment and other inappropriate behaviour
- Comparatively more FM professionals are changing jobs / taking career breaks / choosing self-employment, experiencing mental health issues (depression, stress), not pursuing professional opportunities or leaving a job without another lined up. 39% of IWFM respondents said they had changed jobs due to exclusion, harassment or discrimination and 29% experienced mental health conditions.
- Perceptions of EDI differ - participants from marginalised groups are less likely to agree on progress – gender, sexuality, ethnic diversity. While the front line is often diverse, this diversity features less so in office-based or more senior roles. This point was underscored in the focus groups where one IWFM member noted: "All of the cleaning team are completely diverse, but when it came to all of the building contractors, the electricians they're not, the team in the office are not. I was the only one of a different colour and the senior manager."

At what stage is the problem for FM?

The problems exist definitely at retention / treatment and promotion / progression stages. It features to a lesser degree at development stage.

Has the FM industry been a laggard in EDI activity?

The research shows that the industry has done many of the basic activities around EDI, yet comparatively, a greater number of people are leaving because of issues related to EDI.

Why does the research ask if we are stuck on the EDI agenda?

The research reinforces the importance of EDI and its positive benefits for individuals, organisations, professions and the economy. It notes that EDI *is* on the agenda, yet negative experiences are widespread across the professions. Ultimately, scepticism is growing among professionals about the capacity of EDI efforts to enact change, with a widespread perception that there is much talk but little meaningful action.

Disillusionment with the practice of EDI could mean that progress to date is at risk of backsliding: around one in five (22%) professionals surveyed believe EDI receives too much focus compared to other issues within their profession, 18% for IWFM respondents.

To move forwards, it suggests a new approach is necessary. While highlighting the pivotal role professional bodies can play in catalysing change, the report also addresses the commitments required from individual professionals, employers, and policymakers to support systemic action.

What is the approach forward?

Most existing initiatives are perceived as effective, but their execution is vital. Key tensions to navigate are:

- **Demonstrating your commitment to change in the short-term, while enacting change that aims to have longer-term impacts** > IWFM will do this through committing to the recommendations in the report, which will be underpinned by an action plan that is accountable to the Board. The Action plan has split the actions into short, medium and longer-term activity.
- **Involve those with lived experience of marginalisation in initiatives, without burdening them with the responsibility to drive change** > IWFM will continue to draw on the expertise and lived experience of our EDI Focus Group
- **Building coalitions and alliances across a range of groups, while appropriately recognising their differences** > as part of the action plan, IWFM will not only seek to build diverse networks in place, we will also continue to build coalitions.

Ultimately, we need to re-frame EDI, and equality, diversity and inclusion must be guiding principles for all decision-making – not just for specific initiatives.

The tensions explored in the research go some way to highlighting how challenging it is to shift entrenched systems of inequality and marginalisation. This requires working across these systems, and not all issues highlighted in this research are within the influence and control of individual organisations and professional bodies.

Everybody must play a role in enabling systemic change. The inconsistent patchwork of positive action, from some organisations and professionals, must be matched by commitments from all actors across the system, including (local and national) policymakers.

Interventions must focus on changing the systems that underpin marginalisation.

How will we drive change? Recommendations for the professional bodies

We will drive change by unequivocally adopting the full recommendation set of the Young Foundation's report:

1. Put EDI at the heart of what it means to be a professional by committing to:
   a. updating codes of ethics/ conduct, with corresponding reviews of professional standards, in order to embed the values and principles of equality, diversity and inclusion in the core meaning of what it means to be a professional
   b. critically reviewing communications around EDI to emphasise that efforts to improve professionals' experiences are non-negotiable, and integral to all decision-making.

2. Set higher standards for professionals by committing to:
   a. reviewing and continuously updating and developing all modules of training and CPD courses to ensure the values and principles of EDI are embedded across all learning and development opportunities
   b. ensuring qualifications and accreditation processes reflect updated professional standards, to ensure members are not granted with the highest levels of chartership or accreditation without core competencies around the values and principles of 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, such as updates to codes of conduct and qualifications, and progression pathways
   b. ensuring accountability mechanisms in 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.

Suggestions for the collaborative of professional and regulatory bodies beyond this research:

1. Benchmark progress against the recommendations of this and the [Milburn report](#) on a regular basis (e.g., every three years).

2. Consider whether cross-profession development programmes can be offered (such as management skills) to assist those who are leaders to appreciate EDI issues and develop appropriate approaches.

3. Hold each other to account: commit to a bi-annual meeting across the collaborative to monitor key performance indicators on a regular basis to identify areas of progress and action and share best practice.

Who were the other professional and regulatory bodies in this research?

- The Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA)
- The Chartered Insurance Institute (CII)
- CILEx Regulation – Legal regulator (CRL)
- The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD)
- The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA)
- The Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR)
- The Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply (CIPS)
- The Chartered Management Institute (CMI)
- The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland (ICAS)
- The Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET)
- The Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH)
- The Institute of Workplace and Facilities Management (IWFM)

Recommendations for individual professionals

1. Challenge yourself to recognise how colleagues' experiences may be different to your own and reflect on the personal biases you hold.

2. Actively work to minimise the impact of these biases on your decision-making and relationships with colleagues.

3. Contribute to positive change, working jointly with colleagues and making the most of learning and development opportunities.

4. Reflect on your personal progress and admit when you still have more to learn.

Recommendations for employers

1. Ensure EDI guiding principles are included in all aspects of decision-making. Appoint an EDI champion at executive level, and link EDI to manager and leader development, performance appraisals, promotions and bonuses.

2. Ensure implementation of inclusive recruitment and promotion practices. This should include best practice consideration around role design and adverts, attracting diverse candidates, and salary transparency.

3. Encourage a 'speak up' culture to nip poor behaviours and practices in the bud. Ensure policies and procedures can respond and react to subtle as well as overt forms of discrimination and exclusion in the workplace.

4. Use data, such as staff surveys and exit interviews, to identify examples of discriminatory or exclusionary activities and implement lessons learned.

5. Clearly communicate inclusive initiatives/policies and appropriately involve staff in interventions.

Recommendations for policy makers

1. Develop systemic structures across education, welfare, health and housing provisions, which promote the fairer distribution of opportunity and support for all to enter, remain and thrive within the professions.

2. Ensure legal frameworks regarding equal opportunities, discrimination, harassment, and the statutory commitments of employers (eg, pay gap reporting), effectively protect the rights of workers with diverse characteristics.

3. Commit to participatory modes of policymaking that centre the lived experiences of those with marginalised characteristics in policy and service design.

4. Commit to working with the professions to review progress and promote action on EDI, as has been done previously by the Social Mobility Commission.

What has the IWFM journey been to date?

We published our first Public Statement on EDI in November 2021, which at the time outlined our initial 'why' and the 'how'. As the Institute of Workplace and Facilities Management (IWFM), our mission and vision have since updated, but our members remain central to all we do. What has also remained unchanged is that we want, and need, the Institute to be a professional community where members feel like they belong, are included, are valued and supported and they have an experience that is equitable.

Equally, EDI are essential building blocks of our values and without putting them at the heart of our organisation we cannot achieve IWFM's vision or mission.

We committed to taking concrete steps and measurable steps to improve EDI, striving to reflect the diverse community that our professionals make up and the diverse community and society they serve. And we welcomed a group of experts to become our critical friends, to help us do better – the EDI Focus Group.

Our initial scrutiny, activity and impact concentrated on four themes across our IWFM world: internally we focused on leadership and governance, and the IWFM team, externally we focused on making a difference for the membership and the profession as a whole.

Following the publication of the Young Foundation report, we are committed to implementing its recommendations and to that end we have published an updated public statement on 21 March. Our public statement is underpinned by an action plan, which is accountable to the Board.

We can only control that 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.