

## **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy** *Creating Opportunity and Enabling Success*

### **Introduction**

Developing educational, practice and institutional structures and cultures which support diversity and inclusion is crucial to the future success of the UK architecture profession. The profession must be able to attract the very best, in a world in which there is increasing competition for talent and at a time when higher education costs are spiralling upwards. A diverse workforce will help RIBA chartered practices in the UK and worldwide to maintain a creative, cultural and commercial competitive advantage.

Currently, there is plenty of evidence to show that there remain barriers both to entry to and also progression within the architecture profession. Although architecture is more diverse than some other construction professions, it lags considerably behind when benchmarked against a number of other professional sectors, including medicine, accountancy and the law.

Both the ARB and the RIBA collect some diversity data on the profession and there are a number of other sources of relevant statistics, including the Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA). EDI data on the profession is in many respects incomplete, but a good number of the key issues are clear, and indeed many have been known for a long time.

This EDI Strategy was developed in consultation with the Architects for Change (AfC) RIBA expert advisory group, and has been endorsed by RIBA Practice and Profession Committee and approved by RIBA Council. It aims to help the RIBA to promote and support a more diverse and inclusive architecture profession, representative of the society it serves. The Strategy supports the following objectives in the overall RIBA Strategic Plan:

- 1.1 Lead and support the highest professional and ethical standards
- 1.2 Attract and retain the best and most diverse talent
- 1.3 Provide access to education, knowledge and skills

### **Key Strategic Challenges**

There are four broad areas of strategic challenge that the RIBA needs to address in relation to EDI which form the basis of this EDI Strategy:

#### **1. Leadership for the profession**

RIBA to be an exemplar for EDI best practice in architecture, and to better facilitate:

**Access to the profession:** Equal access, based on talent and merit, to the education and professional training elements required to achieve professional registration as an architect, with the aim that currently under-represented groups become better represented within the profession.

**Progression in the profession:** Equality of opportunity for all qualified architects to progress their careers in architecture, with the aim that currently under-represented groups become better represented in management and leadership roles in the profession, and that gender and other pay differentials are addressed.

**Professional conduct:** Ensuring that the RIBA Code of Conduct and Code of Practice and the associated procedures are and remain compatible with and supportive of the objectives of the Equality Act 2010.

**2. Culture of the profession**

Making available CPD to ensure that the culture of the profession does not tolerate bullying, harassment or discrimination, and integrating this into the RIBA core CPD curriculum.

**3. Image of the profession**

Promoting positive and inclusive role models in the profession and supporting progressive employment practice.

**4. Access to Projects and the Business of Architecture**

Promoting equal opportunities for access to projects and public sector funded work.

**Key Issues for Action**

Existing data points to seven key and present EDI issues for the RIBA to focus its initial attention upon, and it is proposed that these should form the focus of an expanded programme of EDI activity:

- **Social mobility:**

Unfortunately HESA data does not differentiate between architecture students and students on other built environment courses, but within this broader grouping there is evidence that students from low participation neighbourhoods remain under-represented. In parallel with increasing levels of student tuition fees there is growing anecdotal evidence that social mobility is actually decreasing amongst those accessing architectural education.

- **Gender parity:**

Despite making up 50% of entrants to schools of architecture, women remain under-represented in the architecture profession, and particularly so at senior positions in the profession (associates, directors and partners). This and other factors mean that there remains a gender pay gap in the profession. There is evidence that women disproportionately leave professional practice in early and middle professional career stages. Women also remain particularly under-represented in certain areas of technical activity within the profession.

- **BAME representation:**

BAME architects remain under-represented in the UK profession, which does not reflect the ethnic make-up of the general UK population. RIBA education statistics show that progression statistics from Part 1 into practical training and at Part 2 to Part 3 and beyond are much lower for BAME students than for white students. This phenomenon affects all BAME groups and is particularly marked amongst black students. There is a notably a relative lack of BAME owned practices and BAME staff on practice leadership teams.

- **LGBTQ+ Communities:**

Despite progress on lesbian, gay, bi and trans (LGBT) equality across the UK, the *Stonewall LGBT in Britain - Work Report* found that one in seven (14%) of LGBT people say they can't be themselves at work. The Report highlights the discrimination and bullying that LGBT staff and jobseekers continue to experience in the workplace. Recent surveys by the AJ have shown that this remains the experience of many LGBTQ+ people within the architectural profession.

- **Disability**

Statistical data on disabled architects and architectural students is not easy to come by. Just 1% of ARB registrants record themselves as having a disability. Whilst legislation such as the Equality Act and Building Regulations has improved access to buildings for people with disabilities, the relative absence of disabled architecture students and architects, and particularly academic and practice leaders, tends to mean people with disabilities are a topic of discussion in architecture rather than being active agents of change.

In 2011, the RIBA, encouraged by AfC, commissioned the University of the West of England to undertake a study of disabled people studying and working in architecture. A key conclusion was that in particular the educational environment needs to change to be more inclusive of people with disability.

- **Mental Health and Wellbeing**

Recent student survey studies have laid bare how mental health and stress problems affect a huge proportion of today's students. Evidence suggests there is a serious mental health crisis facing UK students of architecture. The 2018 Architects Journal Student survey reported, 'In just two years the number of architecture students reporting stress-related mental health problems has risen from one-in-four to one-in-three.' The problem appears more acute for those also experiencing financial hardship. Long hours, low salaries and financial worries add to the already stressful student culture.

Heavy workloads, long hours, hard deadlines, difficult meetings, budget constraints and other factors can lead to mental ill health. Many architectural practices have little in place to support employees around mental wellbeing, yet there is plenty that can be done to help employers and sufferers to create a healthy working environment, providing what it takes to be a supportive employer.

- **Religion and Belief**

The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful to discriminate against or treat someone unfairly because of religion or belief, or their lack of religion or belief. There is little statistical evidence of the impact of discrimination because of religion or belief in

architecture, but common areas where discrimination can occur relate to recruitment, taking time away from work for religious reasons, and dress code and appearance. RIBA Council considers this to be an important area to be included in the EDI Strategy.

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