



RTPI

Royal Town Planning Institute

One year of CHANGE

Our progress on creating an inclusive profession.

Foreword

Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity (EDI) both within the planning profession and in the way that we engage with communities was at the heart of my RTPI Presidency in 2020 and so launching the RTPI's first EDI action plan – CHANGE - just over a year ago was something very special. Now, as I enter my final year as the Institute's first EDI Board Champion, I am delighted to be able to report back to members on the progress that we have made in delivering the actions set out in CHANGE. However, as we all know simply having a plan is not enough, we need to deliver on our commitments; as this report will show, whilst there is still a long way to go, we have started to do just that. I hope that you will find the report interesting and that as we move forward you will join us in delivering the change that we need to see.

Sue Manns FRTPI EDI Board Champion.

Introduction

Our vision for ourselves and our profession is “to be, and promote the planning profession to be, as diverse as the communities it represents; to act inclusively, treating everyone fairly and seeking to provide a culture which delivers the best outcomes for the diverse society in which and for whom we work”

CHANGE is our 10-year programme designed to turn that vision into reality and [launched in February](#) 2020 by President Sue Manns FRTPI. Six themes guide the programme:

1. EDI strategy;
2. RTPI governance structure;
3. RTPI standards;
4. Education sector;
5. Leadership and culture;
6. Attract and retain diverse talent.

Individually these themes provide a road map towards the genuinely representative planning profession that is needed to solve problems like climate change now and in the future. Taken together they provide a strong foundation for a truly inclusive profession.

EDI Strategy

'Create a clear vision and definition of Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity (EDI) and why it is important to the planning industry'.

A number of actions have been completed. The appointment of a permanent EDI Manager in November 2020 is a dedicated resource that increases the RTPI's capacity to deliver the action plan and establish new relationships with similar networks and partners across the built environment sector. A working strategy has been adopted to align action with the implementation of projects from the [RTPI Corporate Strategy 2020-30](#). EDI considerations are embedded within operational business across the Institute.

Our vision and strategy for EDI as well as a range of resources are now available on a new online '[EDI hub](#)'. As we continue on our journey this hub will be updated with further resources and information to support the profession. On 1 March we hosted a webinar with our partners Women in Planning, BAME Planners Network and Neurodiversity in planning exploring how we can all start to build a truly inclusive profession.

RTPI Governance

'To create effective governance structures to drive and measure the EDI plan'

There are achievements this year in terms of the diversity of Board trustees and General Assembly gender balance (37 women, out of 67 members, sit on the General Assembly). These achievements are matched by our Presidential team which in addition to having both our seventh and eighth female presidents is being led by President Wei Yang, our first from a Black or Asian community.

The Board of Trustees has established an EDI Board Champion with a commitment to leadership and a clear path of handover at the end of each term.

We have launched an EDI staff group to help us better define and understand 'what EDI means for the RTPI as an employer'. This group should provide not only a forum for discussion but a space where issues can be raised and improvements to practice agreed and rolled out across the Institute.

RTPI Standards

'To leverage the RTPI's convening power to create a more diverse and inclusive planning profession'.

One of the Institute's research objectives over the past few years has been [health and inclusive planning](#). This includes research outputs focused on women in planning, including findings that looked at the barriers faced by women working within the profession. [Part 2](#) of this programme, with recommendations on the implementation of gender mainstreaming within planning, was published on International Women's Day 2021.

We are also aware that to have long standing impact on standards for the profession we need to think carefully about messages given across the built environment. Accordingly, we have been started initial conversations with partner institutes including RIBA, CIOB and ICE to explore how we might support each other and work together.



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We have also reviewed our Awards for Planning Excellence criteria to better reflect our commitment to EDI. If you apply this year, you will notice that we have been much more explicit about the type of outcomes that we expect from award winning projects including, but not limited to, the benefits projects bring for people and communities and how community engagement activities have helped to shape them.

Education

'To make the planning profession more attractive to a more diverse population and develop alternative routes to entry.'

Ahead of the published original action plan timeline, the Chartered Town Planning Degree Apprenticeship scheme is up and running in England and we are looking to commence an entry level Town Planning Assistant option. Of the 294 apprentices currently enrolled 14% are of South Asian, East Asian, Black Caribbean, Black African or mixed heritage, just above the national average. There is potential for apprenticeships to support widening access to the profession, and we wish to explore how we can maximise this potential.

Taking advantage of online working and study, and the flexibility that it brings and in particular in terms of reaching people irrespective of location, our annual university student talks programme has been redesigned as a YouTube panel discussion led by the 2020 RTPI Young Planner of the Year, and including RTPI Presidents.

Leadership & culture

'To equip leaders with the skills and insights to drive inclusive cultures and become visible EDI role models.'

For wider change to take effect, and be long lasting, we have to engage not only our colleagues and RTPI members but the wider sector as a whole; to actively listen to and amplify the voices of those within the profession too rarely heard. A range of initiatives have begun over the past year:

Examples include:

- RTPI convened roundtable in partnership with BAME in Property and BAME Planners Network
- RTPI President and Chief Executive headline speakers at Diversity & Inclusion in Planning - The RTPI Perspective, an online event organised by the BAME Planners Network
- RTPI Online Events held regional webinar 'Neurodiversity in Planning: Let the conversation begin'
- To mark Black History Month, an RTPI careers video of two young planners discussing communities, RTPI membership and top tips for students
- RTPI President headline speaker at 'Diversity in Leadership Positions: Addressing the Imbalance' event
- Team meetings between RTPI colleagues introducing EDI opportunities and training
- RTPI President's opening speech at the Young Planners Conference 2020 highlights the importance of equality, diversity and inclusivity and the CHANGE action plan
- RTPI President 2020 delivers keynote speech on the importance of equality, diversity and inclusivity in community engagement to Landscape Institute members



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- RTPI President focuses on the importance of equality, diversity and inclusivity in headline speech International Society of City and Regional Planners Conference 2020
- RTPI President publishes articles on Equality, diversity and inclusivity in The Planner, The Estates Gazette, and Women in Planning on-line website.
- RTPI National Webinar on 1 March

President Sue Manns FRTPI ended her term by acknowledging the work of all founding members of Women in Planning, BAME Planners Network and Neurodiversity in Planning by awarding them all a RTPI President's Award 2020.

Attract and retain diverse talent theme

'To create a working culture and environment where diverse talent can thrive and progress'.

We are entering a 'supporter arrangement' for two years with the social enterprise Building People, an online platform focused on supporting diverse talent into the built environment. This may also unlock opportunities to target early career mentoring and raise the profile of planning to a wider audience of professionals.

Since 2016 we have been offering financial support to undergraduate students at the start of their career journey through the RTPI Trust Bursary. In total we have offered support to 18 students, six in the first year and 4 in each subsequent year. With our initial group of awardees having graduated and entering the profession the time is now right to conduct a review of the bursary scheme and work with recipients and planning schools to identify improvements to the scheme. This review is expected to be completed by September 2021.

Our Next Steps

COVID -19 has made this a difficult year and while we have taken some important steps, it is also important that we acknowledge that we have more to do over the coming 12 months. Our priorities are:

- To work with members, stakeholders and partners, in particular, BAME Planners Network, Women in Planning and Neurodiversity in Planning and Planning Out to develop, and advocate, a robust business case for EDI for the profession.
- To review how best the Institute should collect data on and from the profession, with a particular view on filling gaps in our understanding, for example, to ascertain the number of people with disabilities working in planning. We will also provide new guidance for staff on diversity data analysis, description and language to be as inclusive and respectful as possible.
- To review the RTPI bursary programmes and look for additional ways to maximise their potential to support people from underrepresented groups into a career in planning.
- To work with education stakeholders, employers and partners BAME Planners Network, Women in Planning and Neurodiversity in Planning to explore and pilot



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how we maximise potential of apprenticeships to open up options for talented individuals for whom the traditional route may not work.

- We are committed to CHANGE but we recognise there is no quick fix – that is why we committed to a 10-year programme – but that is also why we are committed to updating you at least annually on how we are doing and where there are opportunities for you to get involved.