

IP Inclusive Annual Report 2019



2019: A year for new things **Foreword by Andrea Brewster OBE**

It all started with a fantastic January panel discussion on diversity “allies”. This was the first time all three of our then-existing communities – IP & ME, IP Out and Women in IP – had collaborated on a joint event, and it set the scene for a 2019 in which we brought even more people together, throughout the IP community, in the pursuit of greater diversity and inclusion. It also saw the launch of our IP Inclusive Ally badges, and it’s been great to see so many people wearing them.

Our annual meeting, later in January 2019, yielded many ideas for the year’s projects. I’m delighted to say that we have been able to deliver on, or at least to make a start on, most of those. In particular we have turned our attention to socio-economic mobility, mental wellbeing and support for disabled people, weaving the three themes into many of our 2019 activities.

It has been a year for new things. Apart from the “joint allies” event, we went live with our new website; established three new regional networks (in the South West, the North of England and the Midlands); recorded our very first podcast (“Demystifying coaching”); set up a task force to progress our Careers in Ideas outreach campaign, with a working group focusing specifically on socio-economic mobility; and launched two further networking and support communities: “IP Futures” for early-career IP professionals and “IP Ability” for disabled people and carers. As a result we’ve been able to engage with more, and a wider range of, IP professionals than ever. We’ve also taken opportunities to collaborate with other IP sector organisations, and worked particularly hard to establish closer links with both IP paralegals and IP solicitors.

In November we ran our first ever diversity survey, to establish benchmarks against which to evaluate our future progress. We were not sure how well this would be received, but the 2019 annual meeting had confirmed that this was the right year to make a start, and we were delighted at the number of responses. The valuable information gained from this venture will be shared at our 2020 annual meeting and will inform our plans for the coming twelve months.

Meanwhile our communities have been busy organising events and resources for their own supporters. The Women in IP community was particularly active in 2019, running events on a wide range of topics, and collaborating with our regional networks and with external organisations to spread the word about IP Inclusive, and the business case for diversity, to a wider audience.

On the operational side, we've created ourselves a new "Lead Executive Officer" role, which I was appointed to in July 2019. As well as leading IP Inclusive's activities and day-to-day operations, my job is also to facilitate and support the initiative's future development, working alongside its governing body IP Inclusive Management (IPIM). It's a role I feel very privileged to be playing, and there is plenty to look forward to.

January 2020 finds us in a strong position. We are reaching more people, extending our influence, and thereby increasing our ability to make positive change. We are in a better place, structurally speaking, from which to grow further yet sustainably. There is however plenty more to do, if we are to build on our 2019 successes. The Careers in Ideas task force needs developing, and indeed we've already started to upgrade some of its existing resources. Our website could do with a few tweaks to improve visitor interactions. Our five communities can together reach out to, and support, their allies and build on the idea of "intersectionality" (the overlap between different diversity categories). We can work more closely with business support professionals within IP organisations. And we can further develop and strengthen our structure, if necessary looking into longer-term funding options.

Our benchmarking survey highlighted the areas where diversity levels are lowest, and we should work on those, particularly through IP & ME and IP Ability. And perhaps most importantly, the survey showed that we need to do more to persuade the sceptics, whether based on the business case or the human one, of the importance of diversity and inclusion to the IP professions. This I believe should be our priority for 2020.

We are beginning the new decade with another first: a full-day diversity conference based around our annual meeting. This will hopefully allow more of our supporters to meet up and share ideas, and generate momentum for our 2020 work. I am very much looking forward to seeing people there and working with them on the plans and projects we discuss.

Heartfelt thanks to everyone who has helped to make IP Inclusive what it is today: an inspiring testament to what can be achieved through volunteers alone, with few resources, when people come together with a passion for change.

Andrea Brewster OBE
Lead Executive Officer
IP Inclusive