

# IP Inclusive Annual Report 2021

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## **2021: IP Inclusive spreads its wings** **Foreword by Andrea Brewster OBE**

In some ways the IP Inclusive I write about now, at the start of 2022, is very different to the one I was leading a year ago. Yet in other, crucial respects, I believe it has hardly changed. Yes, it has grown in size, strength and confidence, but it has also held true to its underlying principles: inclusivity, accessibility, integrity and trust.

Involvement in, and the benefits of, IP Inclusive remain free and open to all UK-based IP professionals. We are driven by volunteers and generosity, by people determined to share best practices throughout the community and to unite and broaden perspectives rather than to divide and jealously protect. We are not here to make a profit, only to pursue our core objectives: to promote and improve equality, diversity, inclusivity and wellbeing in the UK's IP professions.

The first half of 2021 saw key changes to our structure, governance and management, designed to make the initiative more sustainable for the longer term. We became independent of our founding organisations – who nevertheless continue to work alongside us as supporters and partners; improved our governance structures with a new constitution for our governing body IP Inclusive Management and an Advisory Board to guide and support them; and streamlined our planning, budgeting and fundraising procedures.

But at the day-to-day level, the volunteers who are our life-blood should not have noticed too much change. The measures we took are designed to provide them with better support whilst maintaining their freedom to do what they do best, unfettered by undue bureaucracy yet underpinned by suitable safeguards. We believe our governance is sound but proportionate for an initiative of IP Inclusive's size, resources and operating style.

The changes have taken time and energy and we have been hugely grateful to our volunteers for their patience and their input into the process. Many supporters have donated to ensure we continue to thrive. And we are indebted to the founding organisations for having the courage and foresight to relinquish their former control in favour of a new type of partnership.

The real credit, however, must go to the individuals who have kept the IP Inclusive show on the road throughout. The communities, regional networks, Careers in Ideas task force and Mental Health First Aiders' Network have continued to organise events, raise awareness, provide support and generate useful resources. Careers in Ideas now has an important new mentoring hub. We have gained a sixth community, the IP Non-traditional Family Network. A directory of minority ethnic speakers, content providers and other volunteers is well on its way. Sadly Covid-19 is not yet a thing of the past, but IP Inclusive and its volunteers have remained a source of reassurance, guidance and inspiration as we grapple with its ongoing impact in the workplace. Lots has been happening, in fact – you can read all about it in the report below – and there is more in the pipeline.

Which brings me to one last thing. We have enough funding now to take on some part-time staff to help us do more and do it more efficiently. I will very much look forward to that; the administrative burden for the Lead Executive Officer is high now and I know that means I haven't always been able to support other volunteers as well as I'd like. It is however testament to the growing IP Inclusive community that we have all continued to muddle along together, look out for one another and share the workload. In the process we have yet again achieved some fantastic things in a year full of uncertainty and upheaval.

There is plenty to look forward to as we move into 2022. IP Inclusive has spread its wings and is now well and truly airborne. We have good reason to be optimistic.

Andrea Brewster OBE  
Lead Executive Officer  
IP Inclusive