

IP Inclusive Annual Report 2023



2023: Evolution and heritage Foreword by Andrea Brewster OBE

Events in this last year have served to remind us of IP Inclusive’s heritage: how it began, what drives its development, and why it works so well.

You could see it as a setback that our regional networks have been less active and the Midlands one temporarily “parked”, or that our IP Non-traditional Family Network has wound down because its leaders felt it no longer had a role as a formal IP Inclusive community. Equally, you could see these things as a healthy part of the initiative’s growth. Our networks are set up and driven by the people they support; if the need for them changes, we adapt in response.

And as we rein back activities in some areas, we have seen expansion in others. Our (peri)menopause group, started tentatively in late 2022, has gone from strength to strength. During 2023 it provided events, resources and support for menopause inclusivity, opening new forums for long-neglected conversations. As with much of our work, this group tapped into a perceived need and became a focus for people to work together on something that really mattered to them.

Nor have we lost the regional networks or our non-traditional family members’ forum for good. Their creators remain involved and continue to support and champion the people they represent. The five remaining communities have seen significant increases in follower and subscriber numbers, as has IP Inclusive more generally. While some committee leads have stepped down – for example in IP & ME and Women in IP – others have arrived to take up the baton, bringing new ideas and vitality. It is always sad when people we have worked closely with move on, but exciting to meet the next generation of EDI flag-bearers. Recruiting four new people to our governing body IP Inclusive Management (IPIM) has also introduced fresh energy and perspectives.

2023 saw the second half of our popular *Inclusivity Unlocked!* programme, with events and resources to help organisations build back more inclusively after the Covid-19 lockdowns. Another highlight was our *Summer of IP* outreach campaign, organised through Careers in Ideas, which attracted valuable new recruits – many of whom would not otherwise have heard of IP or had the confidence to apply – and new contacts among their advisers. I am hugely proud of the warm and inclusive welcome our supporters gave

to the participants, and the insights they provided into IP careers. Our sector will benefit from those investments. And again, *Summer of IP* succeeded because employers stepped up to the plate together. IP Inclusive simply channelled their enthusiasm so as to amplify their individual contributions.

I have always maintained that IP Inclusive is not a thing as such; it is a catalyst. It provides a nucleus around which IP professionals can gather to collaborate on the EDI-related issues that affect them, a mechanism for both coordinating and empowering their responses to those issues. It follows that as IP professionals' priorities change, so too must IP Inclusive's. We should not shy away from these things. Instead we must allow ourselves to learn from the things our supporters are saying and doing. Which is why we've begun a survey to understand more about EDI support for IP professionals outside London, and why we'll continue to consult with signatories to ensure our Charter scheme delivers value and meaning.

IP Inclusive owes its existence, its development and its strength to volunteers. But of course, we also need to support those volunteers as they grow in number and their work becomes wider-reaching. So in September 2023 we expanded the capacity of our executive team, allowing us to embark on our new two-year business plan with confidence. That plan has a strong focus on allyship. It too will involve IP Inclusive supporters across all our communities, networks and working groups and it will, we hope, kindle fresh enthusiasm and bring in more volunteers and ideas.

For now, I would like to thank everyone who was involved in our 2023 work: our donors, event hosts and partner organisations; our executive and management team; our Advisory Board and hundreds of other volunteers. Let us continue to listen to one another, to accommodate, to adapt. Let us start difficult conversations. Let us be bold about pruning back in some parts to strengthen growth in others, about welcoming new volunteers as others take a step back. And let us continue to facilitate change rather than fear it – because that is why we exist.

We are driven by what our sector needs. There may come a time when it no longer needs IP Inclusive and our work is done. That's OK. But it is not that time yet.

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