

# A CASE FOR CHANGE.

Institution of  
**MECHANICAL  
ENGINEERS**

## **Diversity & Inclusion Strategy 2021–2025** Report Summary



**Improving the world through engineering**

# CONTENTS

|           |                                                    |
|-----------|----------------------------------------------------|
| <b>03</b> | <b>Message from Isobel Pollock-Hulf OBE</b>        |
| <b>04</b> | <b>Executive Summary</b>                           |
| <b>05</b> | <b>Our Vision</b>                                  |
| <b>06</b> | <b>Our Values, Culture and Behaviours</b>          |
| <b>07</b> | <b>The Case for Change</b>                         |
| <b>08</b> | <b>Recommendations</b>                             |
| <b>10</b> | <b>Diversity &amp; Inclusion Five-Year Plan</b>    |
| <b>11</b> | <b>IMechE Message to our Members and Employees</b> |

# MESSAGE FROM ISOBEL POLLOCK-HULF OBE



President of the Institution of  
Mechanical Engineers 2012 – 2013

Chair of the Diversity & Inclusion Committee  
2018 – to date

The D&I Committee soon realised that a structured plan was required to understand the challenges ahead. This developed into a five-year strategy, with recommendations and an effective action plan to follow after consultation.

We commissioned an external consultant, Mark McBride-Wright from EqualEngineers, to assist with the research, running focus groups and leading discussions with staff. The purpose was to identify any perceived barriers within the Institution, and determine our current position, eg “where we are now”.

The full report outlines where we are now, where we hope to go and how we might get there. Our journey has started and we are making progress. There is much more to do to encourage a change in culture and behaviours throughout IMechE.

The Trustee Board endorsed the principles of the strategy that will enable a positive implementation of our recommendations. We hope that everyone involved with IMechE will also play their part to help us achieve our D&I vision of being “visibly more inclusive to all”.

It has been an inspiration and pleasure to lead IMechE’s Diversity & Inclusion Committee since 2018. We now ask for your help and support to achieve our vision for the future.

“““

All IMechE activities and campaigns should be inclusive and represent the diversity of the membership and the engineering profession. We must ensure that Diversity & Inclusion sits at the heart of the Institution’s core values and business ethics, and encourages fairness, trust and transparency.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) Strategy aims to support our vision, culture, foundations and goals across our employee and membership base.

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DIVERSITY is about getting the right mix of people with the right skills and competencies. INCLUSION is making sure the mix works. It is about people developing a sense of belonging, feeling respected and valued for who they are.

Delivering against this strategy will enable us to foster culture change and ensure greater effectiveness for how we operate, how we support our stakeholder communities, and how we lead the engineering community. By inspiring a groundswell of member support, developing understanding, and forging collaborations that endure far beyond individual projects, IMechE will be able to promote its vision for the future in which all engineers are able to thrive in a diverse and inclusive profession.

With the assistance of EqualEngineers, we led focus group and sector-led discussions, with both employees and members, to determine "where we are now", "where we want to be" and what are some of the barriers and aspirations for the future. Across the board the response was positive and encouraging. There was a genuine intent to accelerate interventions that will lead to lasting, meaningful change. However, we also discovered a desire more to shift from the UK-centric approach, to recruit diverse volunteers onto committees and boards, and be innovative and forward thinking, to name but a few. The consultation period helped us formulate recommendations listed in this paper. It also helped us identify the five themes that span across 15 IMechE sectors described in the next section.

One key recommendation of this strategy is to embed D&I as part of the Institution's DNA, whereby an inclusivity lens is applied to every decision, campaign or project undertaken. To achieve this, we will launch a D&I awareness campaign to get the IMechE community on this journey with us. We need to assign a dedicated

staff resource to support the delivery of the strategy, and ensure D&I sits at the heart of the Institution's work ethic. Leadership will play a vital role in delivering the strategy, such as taking bold and visible steps in championing D&I, and leading others by example.

Once an established, consistent and engaged D&I movement has taken root within the Institution, its wider mission to achieve a long-term shift in social norms and behaviours will slowly seep out into the profession.

To collectively own and deliver this outcome, it is vital that the IMechE community recognises the benefits diversity and inclusivity brings to engineering: a wider pool of brains and diversity of thought. More diversity means inclusive and innovative designs. Greater inclusivity values everyone's contribution and minimises the risk of groupthink.

The Institution is on a journey of transformation. We want to see a diverse workforce in the membership we support, and within our own employee base that represents the community we serve. Our brand has a global identity, and is one that is respected by and instantly recognisable to mechanical engineering students and professionals. We need to maintain all our efforts in supporting our membership community, so that we can remain relevant and value-adding to the engineering profession. As part of this journey, we recognise there will be challenges and potential resistance to deal with. We recognise there is no silver bullet to getting the buy-in for building an inclusive organisation. However, by engaging the majority, and with the help of a network of dedicated D&I Champions, we hope to make the case as personal as possible. By leveraging the power of a diverse and inclusive community, we will truly improve the world through engineering and achieve our vision of **being visibly more inclusive**.

# OUR VISION

As a global community of mechanical engineers, the Institution is one of the largest networks of mechanical engineering knowledge, skill and opportunity in the world. We are committed to ensuring that engineers are supported and well represented. We support the engineering community to attract and retain diverse talent.

The IMechE vision is “**improving the world through engineering**” and the Diversity & Inclusion Committee vision is to be “**visibly more inclusive**”. Together these shape the first IMechE D&I Strategy. This strategy adopts an inclusive approach to our culture and behaviours. Together we will foster a change of culture, to enable the IMechE community (members, employees and volunteers) to feel valued, heard and to develop a strong sense of belonging. To achieve this, the strategy focuses on **five strategic themes** across membership and employees.

- 1 **Establish internal support**
- 2 **Secure external support**
- 3 **Inspire a change in behaviour**
- 4 **Drive systemic change**
- 5 **Track performance**

We recognise that we need to **establish internal support** among our employees, members, volunteers, Trustees and the wider IMechE community, to ensure ongoing and continuous dedication to D&I. We will partner with external bodies to **secure external support** for the work we do, to ensure it has more impact. It is hoped that by working in a more collaborative way, we will together be able to **inspire a change in behaviour** and, by working in this manner over a sustained period of time, we will **drive systemic change** in terms of D&I in engineering. Data collection and analysis will be key, and so baselining and regular reporting of the progress we are making will help us **track performance**.

We will continue to monitor our progress using the Royal Academy of Engineering (RAEng) Progression Framework for Professional Engineering Institutions. Our strategy has been grouped into 15 key sectors, which align with 11 of the Progression Framework, and an additional four sectors have been added to cover the wider remit of IMechE activities. The full report outlines a series of detailed recommendations for each of the 15 sectors.

## Diversity & Inclusion Strategy – 15 sectors:

- |    |                                                            |
|----|------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | Diversity & Inclusion Committee                            |
| 2  | Support Network                                            |
| 3  | Governance and leadership<br>(including boards/committees) |
| 4  | Membership and professional registration                   |
| 5  | Meetings, conferences and events                           |
| 6  | Education, training and examinations                       |
| 7  | Accreditation of education and training                    |
| 8  | Prizes, awards and grants                                  |
| 9  | Communications and marketing                               |
| 10 | Outreach and engagement                                    |
| 11 | Employment                                                 |
| 12 | Monitoring and measuring                                   |
| 13 | Publishing and policy                                      |
| 14 | Commercial businesses                                      |
| 15 | Property                                                   |

# OUR VALUES, CULTURE AND BEHAVIOURS

Everyone wants to be treated fairly, and engineering organisations are united by the desire to improve quality of life for society. These factors are drivers to excel in implementing equality, diversity and inclusion practices. Setting goals and putting in place activities that promote diversity and make our organisation more representative of society will ultimately contribute to the creation of a better society. To count on skilled, engaged and motivated employees, Trustees, members and volunteers we must foster an inclusive environment in which diverse talent can thrive.

## Our Values:

*(Subject to review in 2021)*

- We focus on making a difference
- We are one inclusive team and we treat everyone with respect
- We take time to listen, understand and communicate constructively
- We act with courage, integrity and authenticity
- We own our goals and we strive to find better ways of achieving them



# A CALL FOR CHANGE

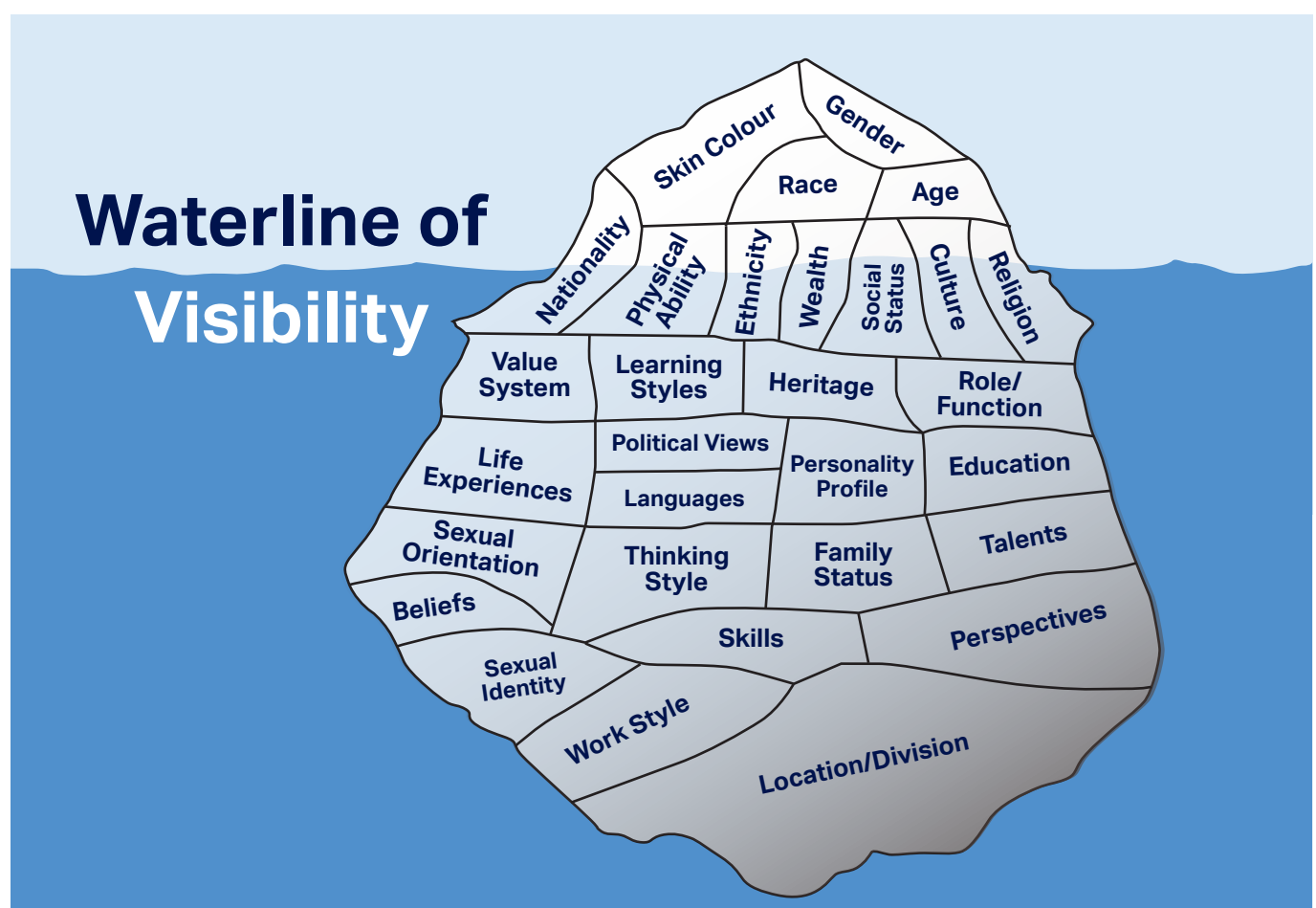
Diversity is not always visible, and does not only encompass protected characteristics such as race, religion and sexual orientation. The iceberg of biases is a common tool to communicate what is visible on the outside and that the richness and depth of an individual are invisible unless you get to know them.

The focus group and sector-led discussions highlighted a sense of urgency and need for change. There is a clear desire to change the culture of the Institution, so everyone feels welcome, valued and respected. The proposed

strategy will support the Institution's vision to improve the world through engineering by developing and promoting engineering, informing opinion and encouraging innovation.

For National Inclusion Week, IMechE asked its employees to share what inclusion means to them.

A few key words that were associated with inclusion on a regular basis were: **empathy**, **understanding** and **listening**. Sharing, inspiring and constantly promoting positive culture, will help us build and develop the inclusion momentum.



*Identity Iceberg (Getting Started: Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit, pg. 18)*

# RECOMMENDATIONS

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The 15 high-level recommendations below should be considered an integral part of the Institution's wider D&I action plan for 2021-2025. Detailed recommendations for each of the 15 sectors are listed in the full report.

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- 1 To deliver the strategy in a timely and effective manner will require significant staff support, including the appointment of a dedicated D&I Officer to ensure D&I sits at the heart of the Institution and across all 15 sectors.**

Allocate additional staff resource to D&I in Q1 2021, followed by the appointment of a D&I Officer in 2022.

- 2 Each sector/department to develop D&I goals for their area of business that links to IMechE's business and strategic objectives.**

Ensure D&I objectives are part of the employee as well as member Board and Committee annual review process.

- 3 Apply a D&I lens to all IMechE processes, to ensure that they are inclusive of all groups.**

Embed D&I in all the organisation's policies, practices and processes, eg accreditation, events, awards, property and policies.

- 4 Encourage engagement and innovation by increasing the diversity of active volunteers.**

Follow the NomCo best practice guide to recruit volunteers with the right skills and competencies.

- 5 Set diversity targets for conference speakers, contributors, and give awards that recognise best practice in Diversity & Inclusion.**

As an example, we know of some speakers who are refusing invitations to speak unless the speaker panel is diverse.

- 6 Ensure the use of inclusive language and imagery is used across all IMechE communications in both printed and online publications.**

Make full use of the best practice communications and branding guidelines (to be published in 2021).

- 7 Develop a robust data collection process for both employees and members at all stages (eg membership levels, recruitment, promotion, awards, events).**

Benchmark and regularly report on diversity data, set targets and analyse trends to implement actions that address areas of concern.

- 8 Partner with best practice external bodies such as WES, AFBE-UK, EqualEngineers, to seek best practice and foster new collaborations.**

For example, use the AFBE-UK Access.A action plan. This will ensure that our Black, Asian and minority ethnic members know that we stand in solidarity with them against all forms of racism and prejudice.

- 9 Establish a network of D&I Champions for both members and employees.**

The task is too big for one group to have all the answers. Active D&I focused working groups are a critical enabler to make real change in a short timescale.

We already know of several members who want to get involved and to be part of the journey.

**10 Plan investment to make One Birdcage Walk and our other operating facilities more accessible and inclusive.**

This should include accessibility beyond mobility impairments, capturing other types of disability: including hearing or visual impairments. In support of ongoing virtual activities, also consider the benefits of virtual accessibility, including capacity to livestream, and videoconference lectures and meetings with subtitles.

**11 Roll out an integrated suite of training packages to support and embed the understanding that meets the needs of both IMechE members and employees.**

Target audiences could cover all volunteers, committee members, STEM Ambassadors, employees, reviewers, accreditation committees, and be made mandatory to certain groups (eg Trustee Board, council, accreditation committees, professional membership assessment boards).

Training could be offered for new joiners, or as part of a skills package that must be completed before joining certain committees.

Training should promote the value of diversity and inclusivity through dedicated training packages, eg. inclusive ethical leadership training should be rolled out to all IMechE senior management and those who are willing to progress to a more senior role.

**12 Consider making Diversity & Inclusion training an integral part of CPD (Continual Professional Development).**

Assess inclusivity in each member as part of the Professional Review process, in the same way as ethics and safety are required.

**13 Embed D&I as part of the accreditation process.**

Use the accreditation process to encourage academic institutions to widen participation through inclusive entry to degree courses, such as the need for support mechanisms for under-represented students, Athena Swan compliance and consideration of inclusive engineering courses.

**14 Ensure educational outreach work is appropriately targeted, accessible and co-ordinated.**

Consider actions that increase attraction of under-represented groups in engineering, and target schools from lower socio-economic areas. Check that language and imagery used in outreach materials are inclusive.

**15 Work in collaboration with industry to make calls for change of perception in engineering.**

Encourage industry to review its STEM engagement with local schools through a D&I lens.

# DIVERSITY & INCLUSION FIVE-YEAR PLAN

**The timeline** below demonstrates the key building blocks that will drive the strategy for the next five years. The aim is to launch in early 2021. We will offer a programme of training courses, to increase awareness of the benefits of a positive D&I culture over the year. In parallel, we will hold discussions with key stakeholders across the

15 sectors to develop ideas and constructive plans, with appropriate KPIs to monitor change. Over the five year timescale, the D&I Committee will continue to monitor and adapt the strategy as required to reach the goal of ***“visibly more inclusive”***.



# MESSAGE TO OUR MEMBERS AND EMPLOYEES

The Institution is committed to actively addressing all inequalities within our Institution and we are dedicated to welcoming bright and focused minds wherever we can, ensuring that our Institution is a true reflection of the very communities we are delivering engineering in. 2020 saw the world-wide acknowledgement of the need for racial justice and the rise in support for Black Lives Matter. As part of the development of our strategy, we have drawn on support from like-minded organisations, including becoming a member of the **Association for Black and**

**Minority Ethnic Engineers – UK** (AFBE-UK).

This is an organisation that promotes higher achievements in education and engineering, particularly among people from black and minority ethnicity (BME) backgrounds. We will adopt its **Access.A** action plan as part of our strategy moving forward."

**ACCESS.A** asks every company to **A**ccept facts about racial disparity, **E**ducate itself and its employees, create a **S**trategy and **S**afe places, and to be **A**ccountable.

## OUR PLEDGE TO BE ANTI-RACIST

The Institution of Mechanical Engineers believes it is not acceptable to take a neutral stance on racism. Racism is systemic; it pervades our communities, and the only way we can challenge it is head-on, together. As an Institution, we stand in solidarity with all those facing and fighting racism. Recognising that engineering is designed and built to benefit all our communities, and that the engineering profession responsible for this should reflect those communities. Currently it does not always achieve this.

It is imperative that we are engaged with all our communities, and gain an understanding of what is preventing colleagues from Black, Asian and ethnic minority backgrounds accessing the Institution and the wider engineering profession.

We are at the beginning of this journey with our Diversity & Inclusion Committee, run jointly by members and Institution employees to support the wider community. We are focusing on implementing a new Diversity & Inclusion Strategy around key areas across our organisation, including:

- **Governance and leadership**
- **Membership and professional registration**

- **Meetings, conferences and events**
- **Education, training and examinations**
- **Accreditation of education and training**
- **Prizes, awards and grants**
- **Communications and marketing**
- **Outreach and engagement**
- **Employment**
- **Commercial businesses**
- **Property**

On its own, this is not enough, and the Institution of Mechanical Engineers is committed to actively addressing the inequalities within our Institution. We are dedicated to welcoming bright and focused minds wherever we can, ensuring that our Institution is a true reflection of the very communities we are delivering engineering in.

As we take these steps together to ensure positive and lasting change in the face of racism, we will truly be living up to our creed of improving the world through engineering.

We welcome thoughts and feedback from you – [diversity@imeche.org](mailto:diversity@imeche.org)

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