



Intellectual
Property
Office

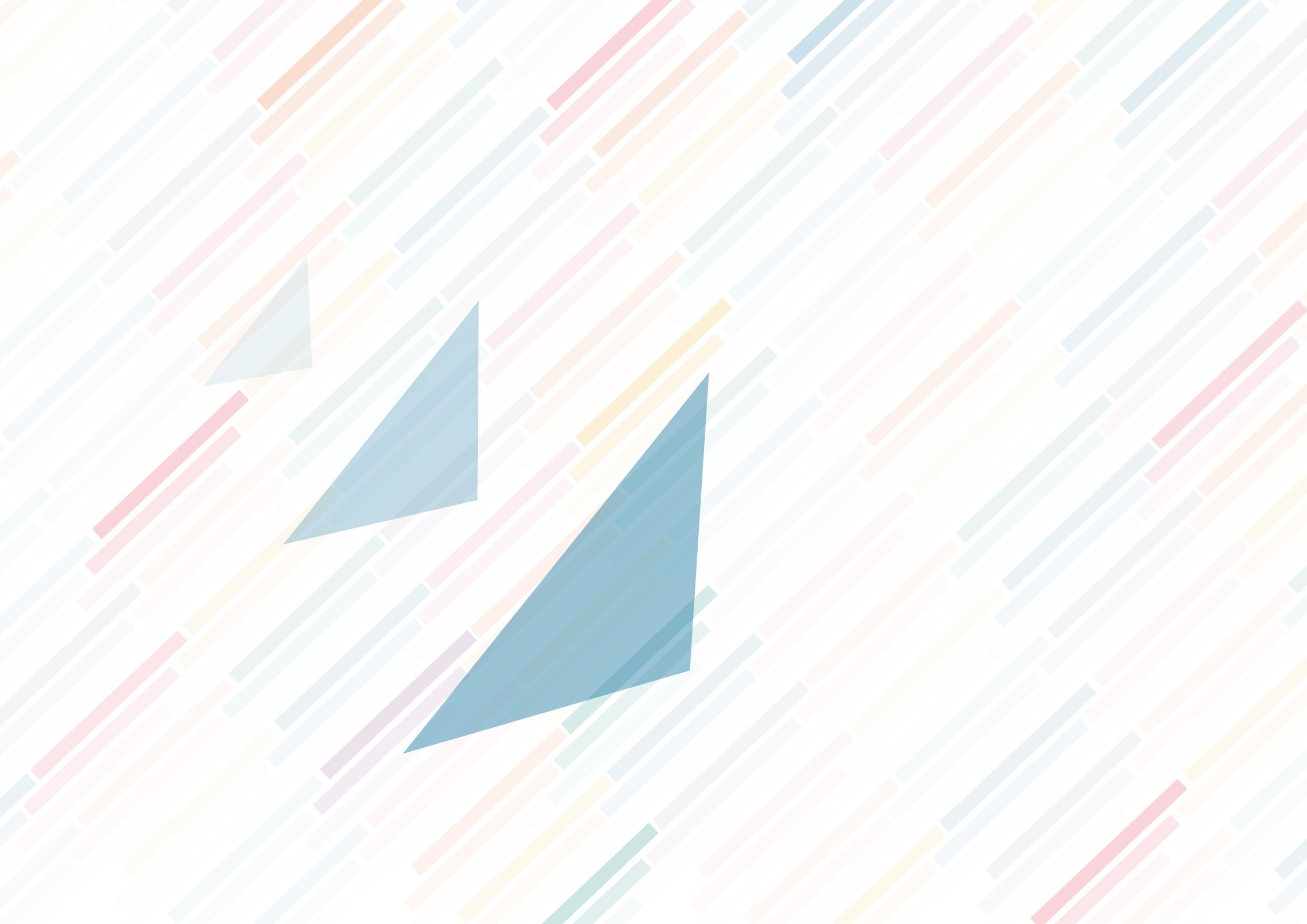
Inclusion Annual Report

2022-2023



IPO | Making life better through IP

Intellectual Property Office is an operating name of the Patent Office



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A woman with blonde hair is speaking at a conference. She is wearing a dark top and a blue lanyard with a badge. In the background, another woman with glasses is visible. On the left side of the image, there is a large, stylized graphic consisting of two overlapping 'F' shapes in shades of pink and red. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

Part of being **a brilliant place to work** ... is having the **right culture** that maintains a strong sense of **community** and **belonging** and encourages an **inclusive, open environment**

Foreword from Penny

The Intellectual Property Office (IPO) is committed to creating the best experience for our people and becoming a brilliant place to work - an important pillar of our corporate strategy. This helps guide our People Strategy and achieve on our aspirations to make this the best IP Office. It's not just about the services we provide as an organisation but how we work together as a community to provide for our customers, the UK and its citizens, and the special people that work here. The UK can only achieve its goals for innovation if we draw on the talents of all parts of society. The diversity of inventors, creators and entrepreneurs play an essential role in shaping the world through imagination, ingenuity and hard work.

Part of being a brilliant place to work and ensuring our work supports UK innovation, is having the right culture that maintains a strong sense of community and belonging and encourages an inclusive, open environment, where people are valued as individuals with diversity of skills and experience and, can contribute their talents as part of something meaningful. An inclusive environment helps us to accelerate innovation, creativity, employment, and economic growth for everyone across the UK. It supports the government's ambition for the UK to become a Science and Technology superpower. A diverse and inclusive environment is a critical part of the IPO's culture from the way we engage with our customers and stakeholders, to our approach to developing and retaining our people. We have numerous successes that you will read about in this report, and of course it is lovely to be recognised in this way. However, inclusion is a journey not a destination, and we will strive for continuous improvement, ensuring that we make more and more lives better through the work we do.

Penny Phillpotts
Director of People and Place Directorate





Our Culture

At the IPO we pride ourselves on being an inclusive organisation. We are a Carer Confident Ambassador, a British Dyslexia Association member, Disability Confident Leaders, have signed up to the Race at Work Charter, and have a Business Disability Forum bronze award. In addition to the external validation, we're also proud to run a number of people focussed initiatives. For example, we recently launched our Empowering Women Programme with the vision of "Supporting women's career goals by having open conversations in safe environments, designed to stretch and inspire."

Our culture is one of the reasons that this inclusive environment has been possible. Our shared values, practices and principles have played a massive part in making the IPO a brilliant place to work.

The cultural journey we have been on over the last five years has helped us become a more principles-led organisation. The Deal is our cultural agreement with one another and with the IPO. It gives us the language to have positive interactions about what we expect from our people, and what they

can expect from us, and their colleagues, in return. Its strength is how it encourages us to acknowledge our good intentions and that of those around us. Policies and frameworks are there to protect and guide our people when they need it, but the Deal is a flexible framework for positive interaction with each other. Its five central principles help us work well together and make the best decisions based on a balance of individual and business need.

It's fair to say that the past few years of change have really tested our culture; a global pandemic, Brexit, and our complex and ambitious Transformation programme, to name three of the bigger things.

Our internal and external environment is expected to continue changing. We are transforming and some things that we consider a core part of our culture are being tested. We need to make sure the things we tell ourselves about the culture we have, are still the right things, and that they are backed up by how we act.

In light of the changing landscape, we decided that the time was right to look at our culture and see whether it is helping us be the best IPO we can be. This year we have been undertaking a review of our culture and we hope that aligning our cultural ambitions with our strategic ambitions will help us achieve and implement our strategy, motivate us to do great work, and give us a sense of belonging and community.

We get to decide the future culture we want and need at the IPO, and we should be explicit about what this looks like so that our current and future colleagues know who we are at the core. If we don't think intentionally about this, we'll have a culture by default, and this may not be the right one to satisfy our customers or a brilliant place to work in the future.

As with any organisation, everyone who works at the IPO plays a part in shaping the organisational culture, consciously or subconsciously.

Over the past few months, we have carried out workshops with our colleagues across the IPO to review our current culture, helping us to understand people's live experiences both as they are now and how they might look in the future. We have also been working with our Staff Networks, Executive Board, Senior Leadership Group and Trade Unions to define a vision for our 'to be' culture. By putting these two pieces of work side by side we can see where we may have misalignment between our 'as is' and 'to be'.

Any cultural work like this is not an exact science, and it's been said that any attempt to change culture will fail – that's why we are focused on finding out where gaps may exist between our existing culture, and the culture we believe will best help us thrive, and then creating the conditions in which the change can happen. This will take the form of a specific cultural development plan, as well as informing our in-flight Leadership strategy, communication approach and inclusion emphasis.





Inclusion and Diversity

Making the IPO a brilliant place to work is a significant pillar in our strategy and weaved intrinsically through that is our spotlight on inclusion and diversity.

We know a diverse workforce is an authentic and innovative workforce and creating an environment where our people can bring their whole selves to work cultivates strong communities. Those communities are at the heart of our intersectional approach to building an environment of openness, trust, and respect.

We can all benefit from an inclusive approach. We know that our connections with each other are a critical part of the IPO culture, and important to building the One IPO approach we strive for. Our focal point has been to reinvigorate staff and understand what the barriers are for our people so that we can overcome them.

Often when people think of inclusion, they think of the nine characteristics that are protected by the Equality Act 2010. At the IPO we like to look beyond just these characteristics to think more widely about inclusion as a whole. By doing this we are able to make sure that no one is disadvantaged by our processes, policies, or structures.

How do we do that?

Our Staff Networks are a driving force for change and critical friend to our HR function. This partnership allows for intersectional working across all the protected characteristics to ensure our policies, practices, services and culture are inclusive.

At the IPO we have a zero-tolerance approach to Bullying and Harassment, our Respect at Work campaign continues to remind staff of this. This campaign is tailored to each department and with our central HR function's support and challenge, we offer training to engage with what respectful behaviour is. Thus, helping us to create an environment where our people feel safe and confident to challenge inappropriate behaviours, which is critical to our success.

To ensure we remain a UK top employer, we partner with a number of external organisations such as Inclusive Employers and Carers UK to ensure we are up to date with best practices. The challenge and scrutiny these partners provide ensure that we continue to develop and keep our people at the heart of what we do.

Evidence based practice is critical to making changes that are right for our people. Regular scrutiny of data helps us to align our strategy to any development points we have. Using data, we have been able to improve policies and practices around things like recruitment, reward and recognition, shared parental leave and menopause support.

Having an engaged and inclusive workforce, as well as a culture of respecting inclusion, greatly benefits our customers. All customer contact should be dealt with fairly and all issues taken seriously in line with the Customer Strategy, Customer Charter, and the IPO Complaints process. We have developed policies around gender inclusive language, how we can help vulnerable customers, and raising awareness across the IPO on accessibility.

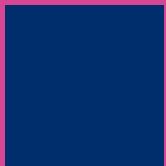
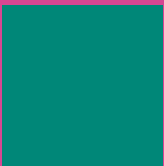
Recognition and awards

We are thrilled this year to have been recognised by several external organisations for being a fair and inclusive employer.

The list of achievements include:

- Race at Work Charter Signatory from Business in the Community
- Inclusive Employers Standard-Bronze status
- Carers Confident Level 3 Ambassador
- Corporate Health Standard Silver Award
- Gold Award Cycle Friendly Employer by We Are Cycling UK
- British Dyslexia Association SMART Award
- Business Disability Forum Bronze Disability Standard
- Gold - Investors in People
- Corporate Members of Neurodiversity in Business
- Achieving Excellence from MIND Workplace Wellbeing Index, Gold
- Disability Confident Leader
- Menopause Friendly Employer
- Charter signatory of IP Inclusive





Networks

Our networks have worked hard this year to celebrate difference and intersectionality as well as improve communities, connections and understanding.



Michelle Lewellyn
BAME Network Chair

BAME Network

Our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Network (BAME) is a network committed to increasing BAME representation and support in the IPO.

Some of our achievements this year include:

Over the last year we have increased membership and engagement with the network through a number of articles and events both online and in the office. In Black History Month the network hosted a panel session ‘who am I?’ with special guests from Potter Clarkson and Kilburn & Strode who are keen to celebrate inclusion in the world of IP. The panel celebrated our similarities and discussed how, despite some of the (obvious) differences we can have, we are not so different whilst also exploring the struggles of identity in an increasingly multicultural world. The discussion received incredibly complimentary feedback from event participants.

How you have celebrated differences and improved communities, connections and understanding:

In the last year we have worked hard to celebrate more awareness months for the first time (Stephen Lawrence Day, Islamophobia Awareness Month). Including hosting a Microaggressions talk to increase understanding across the office and held panels made up of network members for sharing of experiences in a safe space.

Reflection from our board sponsor:

“The IPO aspires to be a ‘brilliant place to work’ and this has a real pull factor. But what does this look like in practice?”

I’m a woman in tech so I’m used to being in the minority in my own industry, but as soon as I started at the IPO I felt accepted for who I am and what I brought to the table. And that is how we want everyone to feel here and there is so much support to enable and encourage that, and if not, we want to know why not and what can be done about it?”

I am thrilled to be the IPO Board Sponsor for the BAME network. This network supports our BAME people, yes, but also supports those who feel they want and need to know more about how life is for others, to walk in their shoes and to see things from a different perspective. We celebrate individuality at IPO, in all its diverse glory’.”

Sian-Nia Davies

Sian-Nia Davies

Chief Digital Data and Technology Officer

Carer's Network

Our Carer's network is aimed at supporting the wellbeing of Carers facing many day-to-day challenges, juggling demanding roles outside of the office along with their work.

Some of our achievements this year include:

Our biggest success last year is the worked carried out with HR to introduce five days paid leave for carers. Another success is the launch of our new network Teams channel where we have been able to share case studies, support and to encourage staff to talk in safe environment. The channel has also been used to host drop-in sessions and talks from external organisations such as Carers UK.

How you have celebrated differences and improved communities, connections and understanding:

We are currently Level 2 Carers Confident and are in the process of applying for our Level 3 Ambassador status. This demonstrates all the hard work and support we have as an office for carers. Things like our monthly drop-in sessions which are opened for all staff to find out more about the carers network and to seek advice and support. We also endorse our support resources through our knowledge information base pages, internal social network and teams' channel to help staff feel supported and connected.

It's extremely important that we are able to bring our whole selves to work and the work the IPO and its people does to enable this is an important part of getting the best out of us all.

Reflection from our board sponsor:

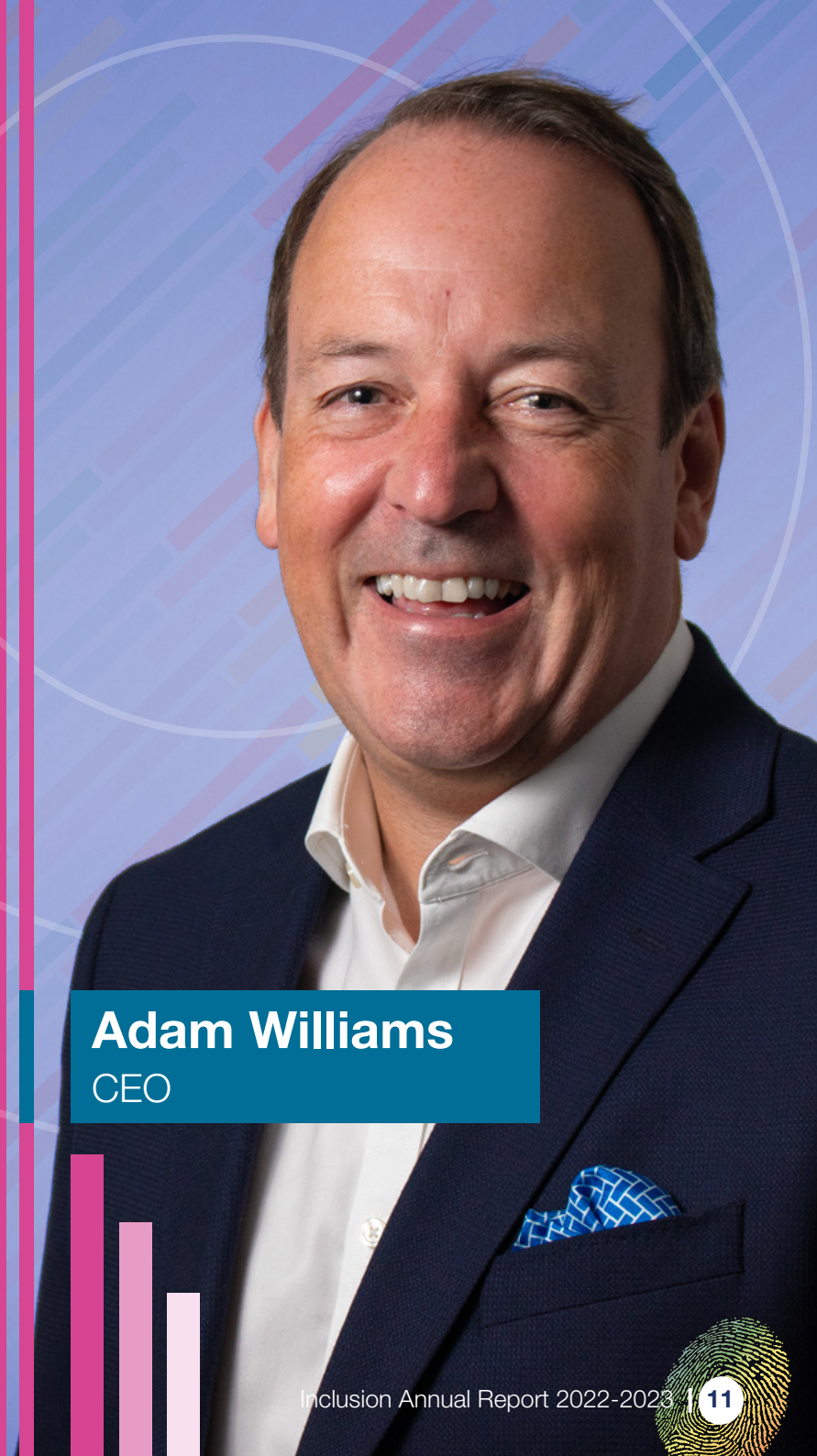
“I am extremely proud of the inclusive, diverse and supportive environment that the IPO provides for our people. This stems from a wide range of policies and mechanisms to help people navigate their individual challenges, build on the support of their friends and colleagues and the ability to use staff networks to share issues and solutions with likeminded people.

As well as supporting the totality of our inclusivity approach as CEO, I am also very pleased to be the Carer’s champion. This is a truly diverse group that is not situated or identified by a particular characteristic or belief, as the need to care for someone can occur for a great majority of us or our families at any time.

It’s extremely important that we are able to bring our whole selves to work and the work the IPO and its people does to enable this is an important part of getting the best out of us all.”

Adam Williams

Adam Williams
CEO





Stephen Williams
iBelieve Network Chair

iBelieve

Our Faith and Belief Network

iBelieve is a network to support conversations around faith and belief (and no belief) at work that will help us feel comfortable bringing our best selves to work.

Some of our achievements this year include:

In the last year iBelieve was most proud of doing a collaboration project with BAME network in December regarding a video to celebrate how people may spend time together over the holidays if they don't celebrate Christmas/don't celebrate in a traditional way.

How you have celebrated differences and improved communities, connections and understanding:

Over the past year iBelieve has tried to improve understanding of different cultures and religions by publishing monthly articles on internal social network. Such topics have included Passover (Judaism), Ramadan (Islam), Holi (Sikhism & Hinduism), Vesak (Buddhism), Ash Wednesday (Christianity) as well as Holocaust Memorial Day and general information regarding different types of annual calendars (which dictate when various religious festivals fall, if not on a specific Gregorian calendar date).

We have also worked with the Parents network, heavily helped by the L&D officers, to run an Easter bonnet competition for staff's children.

Additionally, we have fielded queries from Trade Marks examiners relating to the use of religious terminology in Trade Mark applications.



iCAN

Our Capability Action Network

iCAN is committed to providing support for all of our colleagues living with disabilities.

Some of our achievements this year include:

We hosted an awareness talk from the Hearing Dogs Charity on Dogs for the deaf. The talk included information about their training programmes, how individuals are matched, and the issues individuals face when travelling on public transport or shopping and entering restaurants. Providing insight of the important role the dogs play in a deaf person's life and how they help create independence for user.

How you have celebrated differences and improved communities, connections and understanding:

We have worked with central teams from an accessibility standpoint. The Network has helped to improve signage within the building, looked to provide braille signage and maps, and worked to create accessible documents for publication upon the internet. We have continued to play an active role in Equality Impact Assessments and have provided monthly safe spaces for our members to feel engaged in the IPO community and keep in touch with individuals to provide feedback on things they find useful and difficult.



Doug Adams
iCan Network Co-Chair



iPride

Our LGBTQ+ and Allies Network

iPride is here for all those with shared experience in the realms of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression.

Some of our achievements this year include:

We are proud to have breathed new life into the network after the pandemic period made it harder to connect. We have set new purpose and direction, putting our plans into action by marking awareness days and arranging well-attended events.

How you have celebrated differences and improved communities, connections and understanding:

This year we have supported and represented our own community and reached out to connect and work with others. Our new online resources signpost LGBTQ+ people to places to go, support networks and groups, whilst helping to explain LGBTQ+ issues and interests to anyone who would like to learn more. Our time to chat sessions offer members a chance to connect and share their highs and lows. Meanwhile, we have run a series of successful events, from talks and discussion panels to film screenings, giving the whole office the chance to engage with us and our work. We have taken opportunities to work with other organisations (for example: ONS) or interest groups (for example: trade unions), learning from and sharing with others.

“At the IPO there is space for everyone regardless of their similarities or differences.”

Reflection from our board sponsor:

“I sponsor iPride, our staff network for LGBT+ people and allies - although you don't have to declare yourself in one or other category to join or participate!

For me, the strength and influence of our staff networks is one of the defining characteristics of the IPO as a Brilliant Place to Work. We see time spent by network chairs and committee members not as an added extra to be squeezed in around work, but as a valued investment in the health of each other and our organisation. We integrate them into our decision-making so that senior leaders are informed by real views and perspectives, meaning our stated commitment to diversity and inclusion actually means something in practice.

I'm proud that, more than anywhere else I've worked, at the IPO there is space for everyone regardless of their similarities or differences; and that we recognise the benefits a diversity of identity, experience and perspective brings to our work and our culture.”

Chris Mills



Chris Mills

Director of Rights Policy
and Enforcement



Nikki Dowell
iThink Network Chair

iThink

Our Neurodiversity Network

iThink is a group committed to supporting colleagues in the IPO with neurodiverse conditions and parents of children with neurodiverse conditions by creating a safe space for support.

Some of our achievements this year include:

The network is proud to launch the IPOs first neurodiversity policy and toolkit for all staff and managers. Giving both neurodivergent and neurotypical staff support and guidance. Colleagues from the network were asked to present to board alongside other network chairs to share their options and give feedback. We have also launched new peer support meeting groups to support staff with ADHD, Dyslexia and Autism both in the workplace and at home.

How you have celebrated differences and improved communities, connections and understanding:

We have also been working with our continuous improvements team to improve access to assistive technology and the request process. The network has contributed to transformation to ensure developments are neurodiverse friendly. We have also worked with colleagues to improve guidance in patents to create versions that are neurodiversity friendly key sections and ideas.



Men's Network

Our Men's Network is a network specifically set up for men looking for commonality and support around mental health and wellbeing.

Some of our achievements this year include:

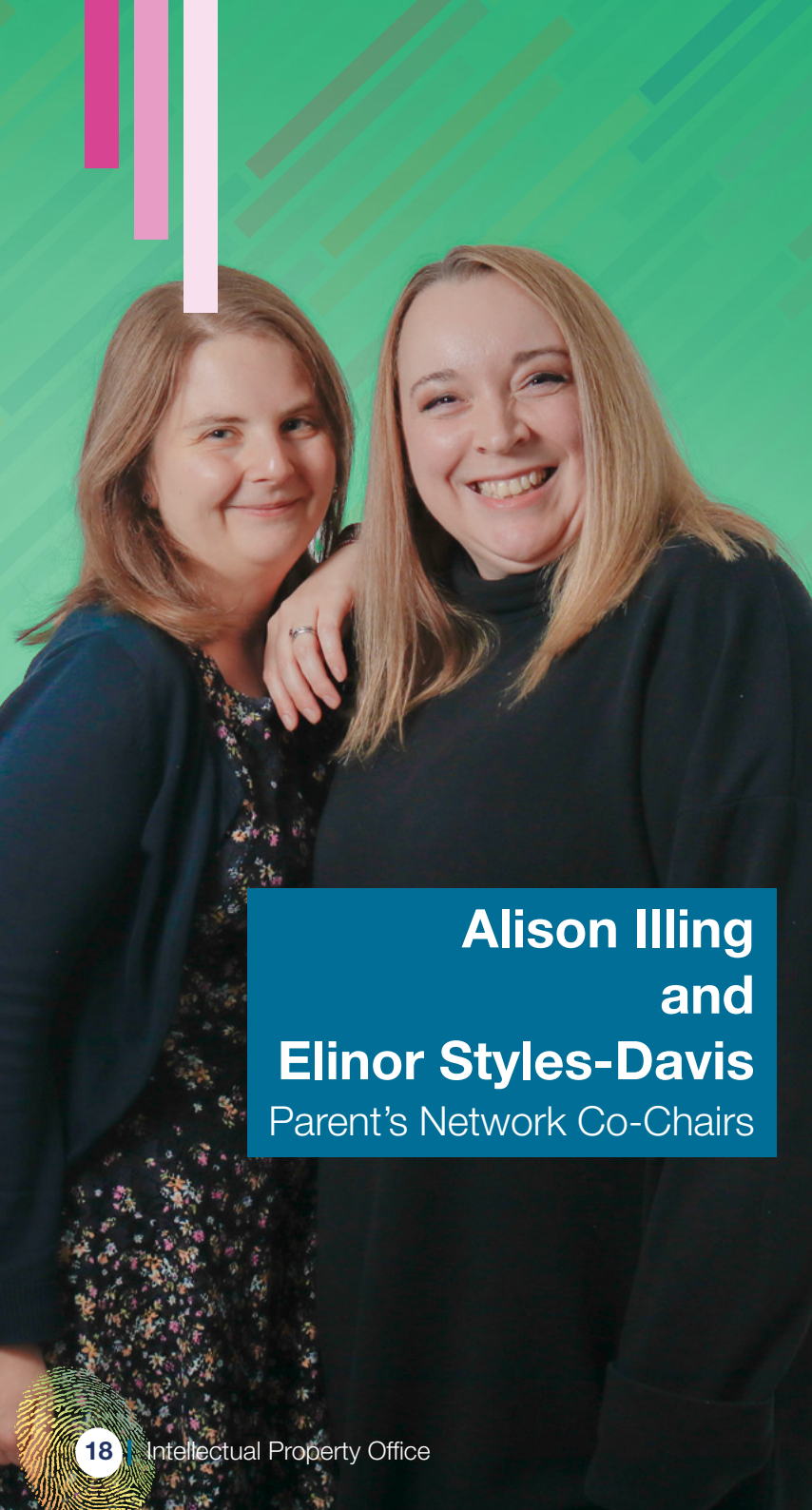
For international men's day we hosted an in-office breakfast event, which was hosted by the head of our coaching network with a spotlight on reflective and self-coaching techniques in a safe environment. The aim was to help identify areas in which men could seek to improve their wellbeing, lives, careers and relationships, and practical steps to achieving this. The network has also formed close links with the newly formed parents' network and hope to work with them more in the future.

How you have celebrated differences and improved communities, connections and understanding:

Despite there being a need for a space to celebrate and support our men in the IPO, the Men's Network has struggled to find a way to tie down exactly what they needed. Through a series of workshops, we were fortunate that our men were comfortable and candid in telling us what they needed. Over the next year, we will continue to support our men to build connections and their communities. Helping them be the role models they want to be, and lead fulfilling, healthier lives.



Gareth Collins
Men's Network Co-Chair



**Alison Illing
and
Elinor Styles-Davis**
Parent's Network Co-Chairs

Parent's Network

Our Parents Network aim to support and inspire all IPO parents to succeed inside (and outside) of work.

Some of our achievements this year include:

We developed and introduced new literature for parents/carers/guardians returning from a period of leave; including a welcome back letter sent to the individual prior to their return and a comprehensive returners guide. We ran a lunchtime panel session on the IPOs options for working patterns and leave, using real-life examples of how individuals work to help others explore everything on offer.

How you have celebrated differences and improved communities, connections and understanding:

We created peer-to-peer support opportunities for parents/carers/guardians by offering monthly drop-in sessions; creating a safe space to share experiences and advice. Later this year we introduced themed sessions for single parents, fathers and parents of neurodiverse children.

Peer-2-Peer

Our Mental Health Support Network

The IPO Mental Health Peer 2 Peer support group aims to provide support to anyone experiencing mental health issues.

Some of our achievements this year include:

Over the last 12 months we have welcomed new members to the group from other networks bringing their wealth of personal experience to group chats. Members have shared photos and artwork demonstrating how hobbies and interests can benefit mental health. Both Peer-to-Peer co-chairs are now Mental Health First Aiders.

How you have celebrated differences and improved communities, connections and understanding:

We have supported office culture activities hosting “Walk and Talk” sessions promoting the benefits of physical activity and informal conversations and plan to do more of these over the coming months. We have participated in office working groups looking at how to provide better support for all IPO colleagues based on their needs and feedback. We have also consistently hosted weekly sessions giving colleagues a safe confidential space to speak freely about how they are feeling, including a Christmas Day session.



Dave Watts

Peer-2-Peer Network Co-Chair



Fiona Dutson

Peer-2-Peer Network Co-Chair



**Hazel Thorpe and
Gemma Jones**
WIN Network Co-Chairs

WIN - Women's Inclusive Network

WIN is the Women's Inclusive Network supporting the IPO to be a workplace where everyone can reach their full potential regardless of gender.

Some of our achievements this year include:

Launching the Empowering Women Programme. This programme aims to support women's career goals by having open conversations in safe environments, which are designed to stretch and inspire. We are delighted that we have 7 groups of 8 women, with 8 highly capable facilitators at all levels across the IPO.

How you have celebrated differences and improved communities, connections and understanding:

In October 2022 the network held a menopause event with guest speakers and information about how people are and can be supported by IPO. Advanced understanding of how extensive Menopausal effects can be. We also held monthly coffee teams calls to create a sense of community, learn about things people in the community care or are concerned about, and support people with their confidence & development by watching videos about/ discussing growth mindset/ imposter syndrome. We also hosted a joint event with iPride and the Men's Network for International Women's Day (March'23) to increase our shared understanding of different perspectives on gender equality.

Gender Pay Gap

In 2022/23 we reported a mean gender pay gap of 18%, and median of 26%, in favour of men's salaries when calculated using Government Equalities Office's (GEO) methodology.

Whilst our concern is not one of equal pay, there is an underrepresentation of women in specialist STEM roles in the IPO.

35% of our workforce are in specialist STEM roles, and although women make up nearly half of our workforce, most of them are in non-specialist roles. Our patent examining roles attract higher salaries due to their specialism, however, only 25% of these are taken up by women.

Although this issue is not exclusive to the IPO, we need to address any perceived barriers that are preventing women from pursuing a career in STEM. We are actively seeking to recruit more women into our specialist roles and remove unintended barriers for all our women to develop in the workplace. There has been around a 3% increase over the last year in the number of women in STEM roles, which reassures us that we are making steady improvements in this space.

As an inclusive organisation, we recognise that despite our median pay gap decreasing, there is still a lot of work to be done. Reducing the gap is complex and therefore needs a consistent and proactive action. It is something that we, as an organisation, take very seriously and reducing our pay gap will remain an IPO priority until it has been brought to a satisfactory level which we know will take a number of years. Our action plan will see us concentrate on three main areas for this year:

Awareness and candidate experience

Our "Employee Value Proposition" work will look at our offering through an inclusion lens, ensuring we advertise the IPO as an inclusive brand and that our people's first experiences of working in the IPO are ones where they feel welcomed and included. We will improve the ways we recruit focussing on skill and potential. We will use targeted recruitment activities and constantly evaluate the effectiveness of our job advertisements.

Review internal processes, procedures, and systems

We will remove any unintended bias from our processes, investing in more effective mentoring

relationships, promoting opportunities for more flexible working and driving an increase in take up of Shared Parental Leave. Our Strategic Workforce Planning will use diversity data to design an organisation of the future that is the right size, shape and skill base to achieve our priorities over the longer term, one of which is to eradicate any pay gaps.

STEM impact programme

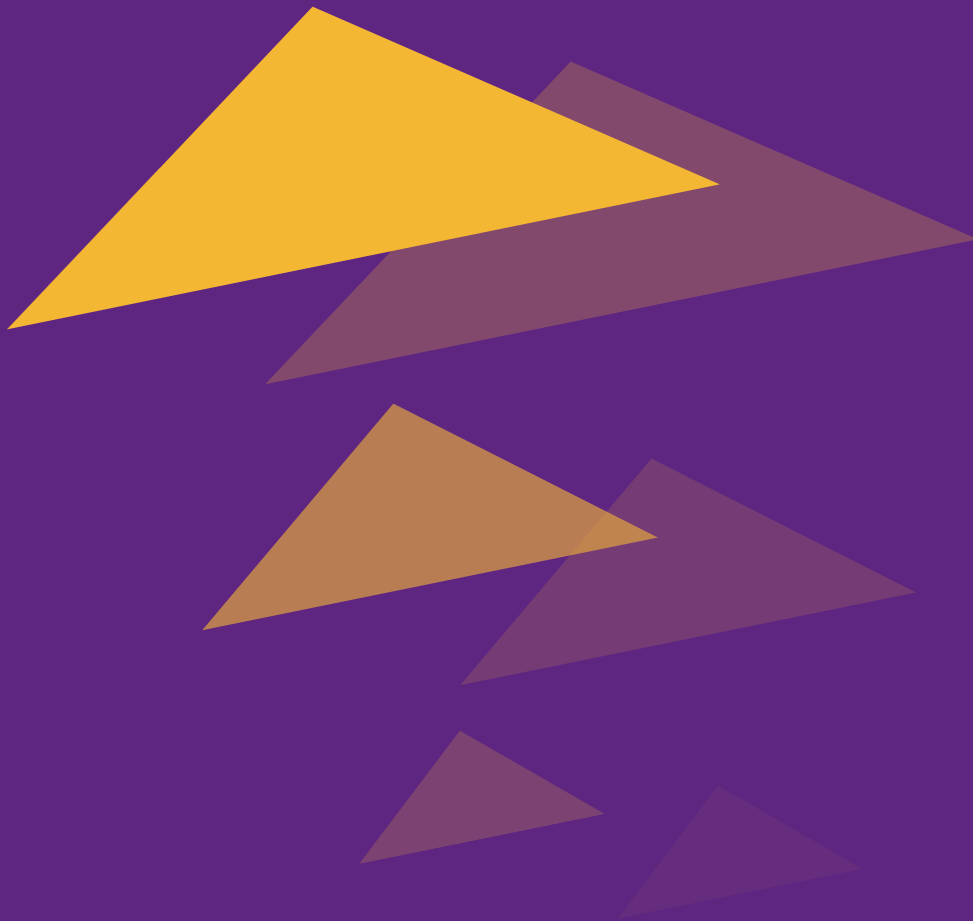
We have used outreach to increase the number of girls accessing STEM opportunities at primary and secondary age. We will also look to support Women later in their careers through Returner and Career Switcher programmes. We will find ways to maximise our existing talent by finding pathways into STEM for people without a STEM background, as well as raising awareness in Universities of STEM careers in the Civil Service.

Creating an inclusive and diverse environment where everyone can thrive, regardless of characteristic is the responsibility of everyone. We all have a part to play in reducing the gender pay gap, and our teams and departments have inclusion weaved intrinsically through their strategies, ensuring everyone understands their role in making the IPO a brilliant place to work, and feels included in our culture.



Our culture is one of the reasons that this **inclusive environment** has been possible. Our **shared values, practices** and **principles** have played a massive part in making the IPO a **brilliant place to work.**

Inclusion throughout the IPO



Wellbeing

To make all our people feel included it is important we concentrate on the wellbeing of all our people. This continues to be a priority and we set ourselves two targets at the beginning of the year. For physical wellbeing we pledged to “improve the wellbeing facilities and services available to our staff, launching our new cycling facilities, gym, and wellbeing suite” and under mental wellbeing to “continue our emphasis on mental wellbeing through conducting targeted activities for individuals, managers and teams.”

In response to feedback, we made further improvements to the on-site wellbeing facilities implemented at the end of the last financial year. We installed a warmup/cool down room for our gym users and providing further drying facilities for gym users, cyclists, and walkers.

Under our mental wellbeing programme, we provided a range of expert talks on subjects such as perfectionism, imposter syndrome and dealing with uncertain times. We ran an 8-week mindfulness programme and trained over 100 managers in mental health awareness. We also implemented a range of resources to help people’s financial wellbeing.

We resumed our programme of health checks by providing over 150 blood pressure, osteoporosis, and cholesterol tests checks. In October we provided over 250 flu vaccinations at Concept House.

This year has really seen the various parts of IPO take their own responsibility for wellbeing in their divisions. For example, our Trade marks, Design and Registered Rights Legal & Practice Directorate (TMDLP) have brought in the “Wellbeing Wednesday” initiative whilst at the same time regularly coming together to learn from other directorates with support from staff counsellors and the cross IPO wellbeing team.

Corporate Social Responsibility

It's important we built relationship with the community to show ourselves as an inclusive employer.

As we finally emerged from the pandemic, we have seen an increase in organisations offering volunteering opportunities. Volunteering for the community is an important part of our wellbeing programme and we were keen to re-build our programme as opportunities become available.

To show our commitment this year we set an objective to “increase volunteering opportunities and build partnerships with additional organisations.”

During the year we advanced our partnership with a local Secondary school by recruiting IPO volunteers to provide feedback at a “Dragon’s Den” style event and providing feedback on presentations for the “Skills Challenge” which forms part of their Welsh Baccalaureate qualification. We were also pleased to welcome Career Wales to the office to publicise the wider opportunities that are available.

Outdoor opportunities which help the environment and provide a link with our environmental programme are always popular. During the year IPO teams helped to eradicate Himalayan Balsam at the Bannau Brycheiniog (Brecon Beacons) National Park; improved an inner-city community garden and contributed to litter picking, vegetation management and planting a bench for the Canal River Trust. We again worked with our neighbours, Tredegar House (a National Trust property), to assist with ground clearance and we helped Keep Wales Tidy with litter picking activities.

We were also able to resume our charitable activities and raised £500 for McMillan by holding an on-site coffee morning.

We allow our people to take advantage of 6 volunteering days a year. Our internal time recording system showed that a total of 86 days were spent volunteering this year – an increase of 40% on the 52 hours spent the year before.



Staff Counsellors

At some point most of us will encounter issues, either personal or work-related which can affect our mental health and wellbeing. The IPO has a well-established Mental Health Strategy (launched in 2016) which sets out our vision for an organisation where mental health issues are truly understood and de-stigmatised.

We want our people to feel confident to talk about their mental health and know that the office will help and support them. The continuous mental health and wellbeing support available to all IPO staff includes:

- Weekly peer-2-peer mental health support group and a monthly Grief Café
- Network of trained and supported Mental Health First Aiders
- Employee Assistance Programme
- Staff Counselling Service

Our Staff Counsellors are professionally qualified to offer therapeutic support to all staff with mental health or emotional issues, as well as personal or work-related difficulties. Clients can personalise this service, opting for a one-off session or regular appointments.

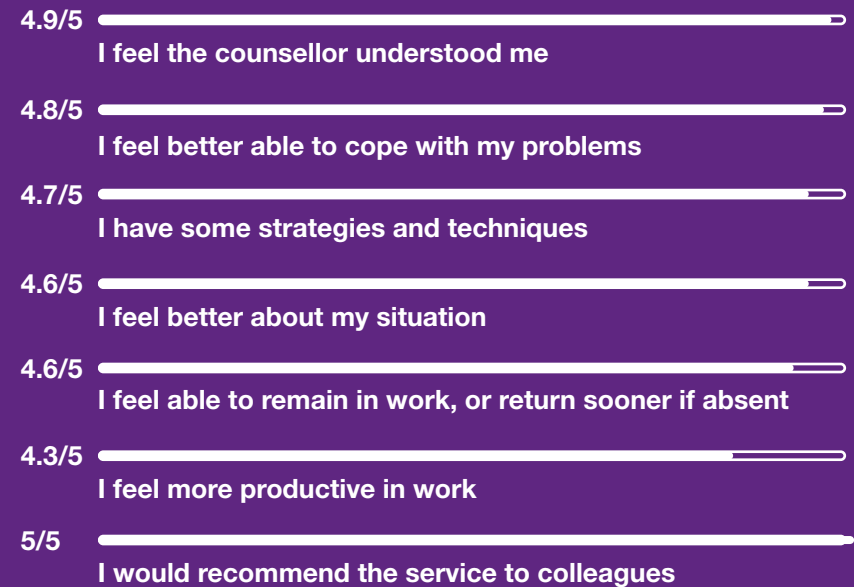
Much of the counselling work involves directly supporting individuals while they address problems that are either undermining their effectiveness at work or necessitating absence from work.

Referral routes

As in previous years, most clients self-referred, indicating a high level of awareness of the service among staff. There has been an increase in the number of staff who found the service via our intranet suggesting the enhanced mental health pages and related intranet articles have been effective at raising awareness.

- 43% found us via our intranet
- 27% self-referred based on a personal recommendation
- 22% were advised to contact us by a line-manager
- 6% were signposted to us by a Mental Health First Aider

Evaluation of the service





Issues raised

Issues related to bullying and harassment were raised in 0.5% of total counselling sessions completed during 2022-23.

Issues related to the cost of living were raised in 10% of sessions during 2022-23.

Client feedback

“Superb service. I can’t express how valuable this resource is to myself and the office. Never ever lose this.”

“I just wanted to say how lucky we are at the IPO to have this service at our fingertips. It has been incredibly helpful for me and I was able to access support when I needed it most, unlike others who are waiting on NHS lists or paying privately. I feel very privileged.”

“I think the counselling service at the IPO is brilliant and feel lucky to work somewhere that offers such a helpful service to its people, with no charge and much shorter waiting times than I have been quoted elsewhere. Thank you!”

“I found the sessions hugely useful in unravelling the issues which had overwhelmed me. Using the tips and techniques discussed, I feel better placed to cope with situations and feel so much more positive. I recommend the IPO counselling service 😊 ”



Other work

Staff Counsellors continue to work closely with the IPO Sustainability Team on a programme of work associated with the Mental Health Strategy. Staff Counsellors support the Harassment Contact Officers and Mental Health First Aider Networks and have links with the Peer-2-Peer support group and Grief Café facilitators as well as with the provider of our Employee Assistance Programme, Health Assured.

Overall, our staff counsellors are a part of an evolving culture at IPO which aims to equip members of staff with the coping mechanisms and support networks they need to maintain good mental health. We recognise how much value our people put on these resources and continue to develop and evolve our service.

Recruitment

At the IPO we understand that to achieve and maintain our goal of being the Best Intellectual Property office we need diverse teams of people bringing diversity of thought, skills and culture to our organisation. To maximise this, we make use of several job boards to promote our roles to a wide variety of potential applicants, including BME, Disability, and LGBT Jobs.

The IPO strive to provide an environment where people can have a good work life balance. To help us achieve this we offer part-time and flexible working for most of our roles. This helps us support candidates with different backgrounds, such as those with parental or caring responsibilities.

We support any candidate requiring an adjustment at any stage of the recruitment process, even if they do not feel that they qualify for the Disability Confident Scheme.

The IPO is committed to diversifying our talent pools. For example, we have introduced several innovative schemes to help achieve this and have recommenced A Code First Girls (CFG) Programme and STEM Returners Scheme this year.

In addition to this great work, we have introduced a Patents Degree Apprenticeship, allowing successful candidates a route into a technically based role with a fully funded degree qualification and work experience.

The IPO actively support Civil Service programmes including The Going Forward into Employment scheme, which is a programme that improves life chances for people leaving prison, as well as veterans and their spouses, through employment in the Civil Service and The Disability Confident scheme, which demonstrates the IPO's commitment to removing any barriers that may be faced by applicants.

We value the skills, talent and abilities that marginalised individuals have, and those skills that they developed to overcome barriers and want them to flourish and enjoy their career with us. We continue to review our processes to ensure they remain inclusive, hoping to introduce further innovations to our recruitment methods over the coming year.

Recruitment diversity statistics

Overall, we attracted 1734 people who completed at least one stage of the application process, including an online test where relevant. Below shows the attraction percentage split by protected characteristics for applicants that applied to IPO vacancies in 2022/23:

Gender

Man	44%
Woman	37%
Prefer not to disclose	3%
Prefer to self-describe	0%
No Value	16%

Ethnicity

White	50%
Asian/Asian British	16%
Black/African/Caribbean	9%
Prefer not to disclose	5%
Mixed/multiple ethnic group	3%
Other ethnic group	2%
No value	16%

Disability

No	71%
Yes	8%
Prefer not to disclose	5%
No Value	10%

Sexual orientation

Heterosexual or straight	70%
Prefer not to disclose	9%
Bisexual	4%
Gay or lesbian	2%
Prefer to self-describe	0%
No value	16%

Age Range

16-24	7%
25-29	14%
30-34	14%
35-39	14%
40-44	11%
45-49	9%
50-54	6%
55-59	3%
Prefer not to say	5%
60-64	1%
65+	0%
No value	16%

We saw a total of 130 successful applicants at interview. Percentages of protected characteristics are listed in the table below. As above, we see consistent levels of success throughout the characteristics. Disappointingly though, we still see higher drop out rates amongst candidates from ethnic minority backgrounds, work to tackle this issue has been built into our pay gap action plan:

Gender

Man	55%
Woman	42%
Prefer not to disclose	3%
Prefer to self-describe	0%

Ethnicity

White	66%
Asian/Asian British	15%
Black/African/Caribbean	12%
Prefer not to disclose	4%
Mixed/multiple ethnic group	2%
Other ethnic group	1%

Disability

No	83%
Yes	9%
Prefer not to disclose	8%

Sexual orientation

Heterosexual or straight	87%
Prefer not to disclose	8%
Bisexual	4%
Gay or lesbian	1%
Prefer to self-describe	0%

Age Range

16-24	5%
25-29	9%
30-34	16%
35-39	22%
40-44	18%
45-49	10%
50-54	10%
55-59	4%
Prefer not to say	4%
60-64	2%
65+	0%

Lastly, we saw a total of 53 applicants that withdrew at interview. Percentages of protected characteristics are listed in the table below and show varying results, with higher withdrawal rates of men than women, and higher withdrawal rates from applicants with ethnic minority backgrounds. Again, actions to tackle any unintentional barriers will be tackled under our pay gap action plans:

Gender

Man	67%
Woman	36%
Prefer not to disclose	3%
Prefer to self-describe	0%

Ethnicity

White	64%
Asian/Asian British	15%
Black/African/Caribbean	6%
Prefer not to disclose	11%
Mixed/multiple ethnic group	4%
Other ethnic group	0%

Disability

No	94%
Yes	6%
Prefer not to disclose	0%

Sexual orientation

Heterosexual or straight	81%
Prefer not to disclose	15%
Bisexual	2%
Gay or lesbian	2%
Prefer to self-describe	0%

Age Range

16-24	2%
25-29	19%
30-34	19%
35-39	17%
40-44	13%
45-49	8%
50-54	9%
55-59	6%
Prefer not to say	6%
60-64	2%
65+	0%

Accessibility

Over the last year we have set up an accessibility champions network. Attracting almost 50 representatives from various areas within our business. We are proud to say that they now fly the flag for inclusive content and do a great job of initiating improvements in their areas. As a network, we then set out to support the rest of our people in their learning. Our in-house creative team have made a set of animated resources based on the Worcester Council SCULPT framework and we've brought in more training for IPO people to learn about creating accessible documents and other digital content. As we learn more and more about how to be inclusive in our information and services, we're making small and frequent improvements to what we do and most importantly, how we do it.

Some of the developments our network members have started include:

- Inclusion of accessibility requirement information in our contracts and renewals of contracts
- Better tagging of headings to enable users of assistive technology to navigate our website
- Improvements to customer letters, removing jargon and replacing with plain English
- Conversion of PDF format letters, to accessible versions
- Clearer text description on our YouTube videos
- Subtitling of image and video content on externally facing digital channels
- Use of contrasting colours on images
- Ensuring use of alternative text on all our internal and external facing digital places
- Monitoring of customer feedback – our Customer Experience Unit now has a dedicated category for accessibility
- Creation of a bank of accessibility learning resources for IPO people
- Use of accessible Word and PowerPoint templates

We've also commissioned third parties to audit our content for accessibility and have worked through a small list of recommendations, making improvements to our intranet pages and customer letters.

We realise that digital accessibility isn't all that matters though, so to ensure that we continue to improve our inclusive culture and environment, we're about to conduct a gap analysis to find out what more we could be doing for our people and our customers. We always say 'we don't know, what we don't know'... but we'll certainly do our best to find out.

Continuous Improvement Team

Various areas of the IPO have been working collaboratively with our Occupational Health provider to review and improve our current process when requesting assistive technologies. By seeking feedback from colleagues requesting, and using assistive

technologies, we have identified some significant areas for improvement. Working together, we have implemented improvements to this process, making these technologies easier to request, implement, and use.

User research

The Digital, Data and Technology department works closely with Inclusion and Diversity representatives to ensure the technology and services provided both internally and externally meet user needs.

New services are created in line with GOV.UK style guide, service standard and alignment with level AA Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.1) is always our aim with user centred design embedded in the creation of IPOs transformed services.

Working collaboratively on our internal processes has become the norm, helping to improve access to assistive technologies ensures user needs can be met whilst maintaining the integrity of our technical estate. All approved technologies are catalogued, and experiences shared to help introduce alternatives that may be beneficial to the wider IPO community.

Providing alternative technologies that can improve day to day working experiences for our colleagues and embedding user centred design in our thinking help us work towards achieving IPO equality objectives.

““ Since launching Speak Our Customers’ Language, we have seen a 50% reduction of complaint escalations.””

Customers

Over the past year, improving the way we interact with customers, listening and acting upon their issues has been a priority. We have worked alongside an external company to develop a communication style to use when responding to customer complaints. This is called “Speak Our Customers’ Language”. The principles of this work are to make the author think about the customer as a human being and not just part of a process. It encourages writing with empathy. Writing clearly and dropping the jargon. This style also works hand in hand with accessibility and pushes the use of gender inclusive language.

Since launching Speak Our Customers’ Language, we have seen a 50% reduction of complaint escalations. We have supported some business areas to make changes to some letters, and this resulted in a 20% reduction in customer’s asking for further clarification.

Working closely with the Accessibility Champions Network, we have set up a process for all accessibility related customer feedback, to be recorded by the Customer Experience Unit. This feedback is assessed and resolved where possible. We keep the customer fully informed along the way, ensuring that they know we are listening and acting when we can.

We recognise that customers, due to their personal circumstances, can have a range of diverse needs. To make sure we treat customers fairly, we are producing guidance for staff when interacting with customers with specific needs.

Education Outreach

Over the past 12 months, our team has taken significant strides to champion inclusivity and diversity, benefiting our customers, people, and communities. One of our notable actions was our participation in the Big Bang Fair, where we engaged with a remarkable 28,989 young people and 7,207 teachers and adults. Impressively, this outreach reached over 393 schools, and even more promising is that 61.1% of the young attendees hailed from schools that met Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) criteria, underscoring our commitment to reaching truly diverse audiences. Our stand at the fair was thoughtfully designed for inclusivity, enabling physical interaction, and featuring meticulously planned activities for all our visitors. This approach broadened our reach while also demonstrating our dedication to inclusivity.

Additionally, our annual “Wallace & Gromit’s Cracking Ideas” Competition includes adaptable materials suitable for varied ages, abilities, and interests. Further, we have added a gender-neutral option on our competition forms. We are currently in the process of developing a new website with diversity and inclusion at its core, aimed at exceeding accessibility regulations. These undertakings exemplify our continuous

commitment within an organisation that values and supports diversity and inclusion, which ultimately benefits all our stakeholders and audiences.

How our people feel about working at the IPO

To me, there are several sides to inclusion. First and foremost, inclusion in the IPO is all about creating a supportive environment where everyone can be themselves, so that they can do their best work. I know how hard the Inclusion and Diversity team work to make this a reality for absolutely everyone in the IPO, whether or not you feel you have a particular characteristic or are represented by a staff network.

Secondly, to me, inclusion in the IPO is about creating the systems which enable people to thrive. This relies on; data to understand the present situation, and a grasp of cultural features so that we can achieve targeted systemic change. We see this created in things big and small, from a STEM returners programme, to tweaks to the recruitment process.



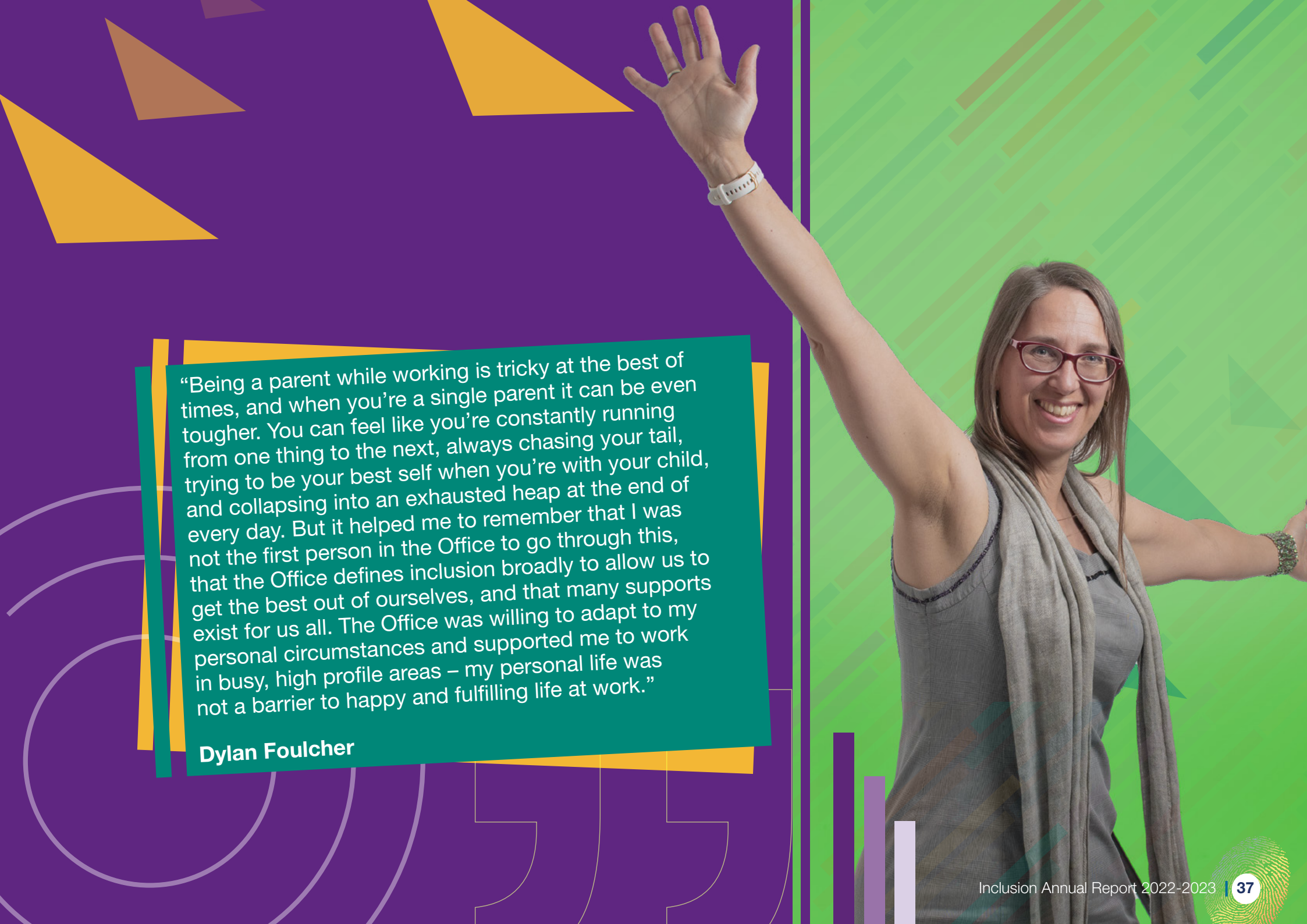
How our people feel about working at the IPO

"I'm proud to work in an IPO which is focused on narrowing gender and race pay gaps and that strives to be a Brilliant Place to Work."

Hazel Thorpe

"The overall support I received from my team and the office during this time was incredible. I'd been coming into the office during the pandemic for my wellbeing and suddenly had no idea how I was going to commute. There was no clear guidance for what support could be given in this situation. However, after discussions with my team and HR, the office offered to cover the occasional cost of a taxi for a month, giving me time to find other ways to travel. It was just one less thing I had to worry about at the time, but it made a huge difference for how I was able to adjust and I'm so, so grateful."

Quote from Molly Pugh after being diagnosed with Epilepsy.



“Being a parent while working is tricky at the best of times, and when you’re a single parent it can be even tougher. You can feel like you’re constantly running from one thing to the next, always chasing your tail, trying to be your best self when you’re with your child, and collapsing into an exhausted heap at the end of every day. But it helped me to remember that I was not the first person in the Office to go through this, that the Office defines inclusion broadly to allow us to get the best out of ourselves, and that many supports exist for us all. The Office was willing to adapt to my personal circumstances and supported me to work in busy, high profile areas – my personal life was not a barrier to happy and fulfilling life at work.”

Dylan Foulcher

Diversity Statistics

Working pattern:

- 18.46% part time
- 81.54% full time

Our people are now working in a hybrid way. The percentage of people that work some sort of part time hours has increased from 18.06% in March 2022 to 18.46% in March 2023. We support a variety of work patterns, from full time, term time and part-time.

Gender:

- 46.78% Female
- 53.22% Male

Gender in STEM roles:

- 24.75% Female
- 75.25% Male

Gender in non-STEM roles:

- 60.75% Female
- 39.25% Male

The increase of recruiting women into STEM roles is helping reduce the gender pay gap. We have seen the proportion of women in STEM roles increase from 22% in 2021 to 24.75% in 2023, showing that initiatives targeting women into STEM are working for us. Attention is needed to encourage men to apply for non-STEM roles.

March 2023

Age range	Head count	%
16-24	58	3
25-29	190	11
30-34	227	13
35-39	232	14
40-44	241	14
45-49	250	15
50-54	216	13
55-59	145	9
60-64	100	6
65+	32	2

The percentages of declaration rates across the following protected characteristics show a percentage of the number of declarations on our HR systems, rather than a percentage of our total workforce.

Disability as declared by individuals:

- 92.65% not disabled
- 7.35% disabled

Ethnicity:

- 6.73% ethnic minority
- 89.58% white
- 3.69% prefer not to say

LGBT:

- 6.08% LGBTQ+
- 86.46% heterosexual
- 7.46% prefer not to say

In summary the figures are showing a gradual increase in either the proportion of the organisation with a protected characteristic or the number of people that are more comfortable with sharing their declaration data.

The number of candidates from ethnic minority groups has increased again this year with 30% of successful candidates declaring that they were from an ethnic minority. Disappointingly though, we are still seeing higher drop our rates (25%) amongst candidates from ethnic minority backgrounds. We are working to tackle this.



Reflections

For about a decade I've worked to champion inclusion and diversity within the IPO, and in the last few years also across the IP Profession and the Government Science and Engineering Profession as a whole. What strikes me is how much development we have achieved in these spaces and yet how much more there is to do. The more we achieve, the more we are challenged, and we need to adapt to keep on improving.

Since returning to work hybrid, the IPO has adjusted its space, its society and its expectations to work better together. We can't all be in the same place at once and we can't be remote all the time, but we can trust, respect and encourage each other to do our best for each other and for our customers by accommodating our differences and maximising our strengths. We have done this by working with our external partners and been recognised with accreditation. We have contributed ideas and resources to the IP and Government professions and to other IPOs and learnt and built networks in return. From tackling the challenge of pronouncing names (or handling others' mispronunciation of one's own), to influencing international inclusion initiatives led by the USPTO, we have sought

to engage and improve inclusion head on. But after a decade, something has changed. We are hearing inclusion in our day-to-day conversations and experiencing better links between all our work and all our selves. Inclusion has become woven into our day-to-day association, whether in the same room or on different continents. It has become our business as usual.

As a result of maturing, we have seen improvements in our declaration data, and more people role modelling authenticity. In March the Inclusion and Diversity Steering Group, which started as a volunteer task force ten years ago, recognised that the staff networks, our Business Change Managers and our leaders – all of us – were best placed to encourage inclusion forward, and that is our model now. We have achieved more than we dreamed of and yet there is more than ever to do!

Current challenges include continuing to narrow the gender pay gap and using our data to identify and confront other improvements. We will continue our outreach and support for accessible entry points like apprenticeships and vacancies and measure outcomes to understand what works best. Our partnerships with external

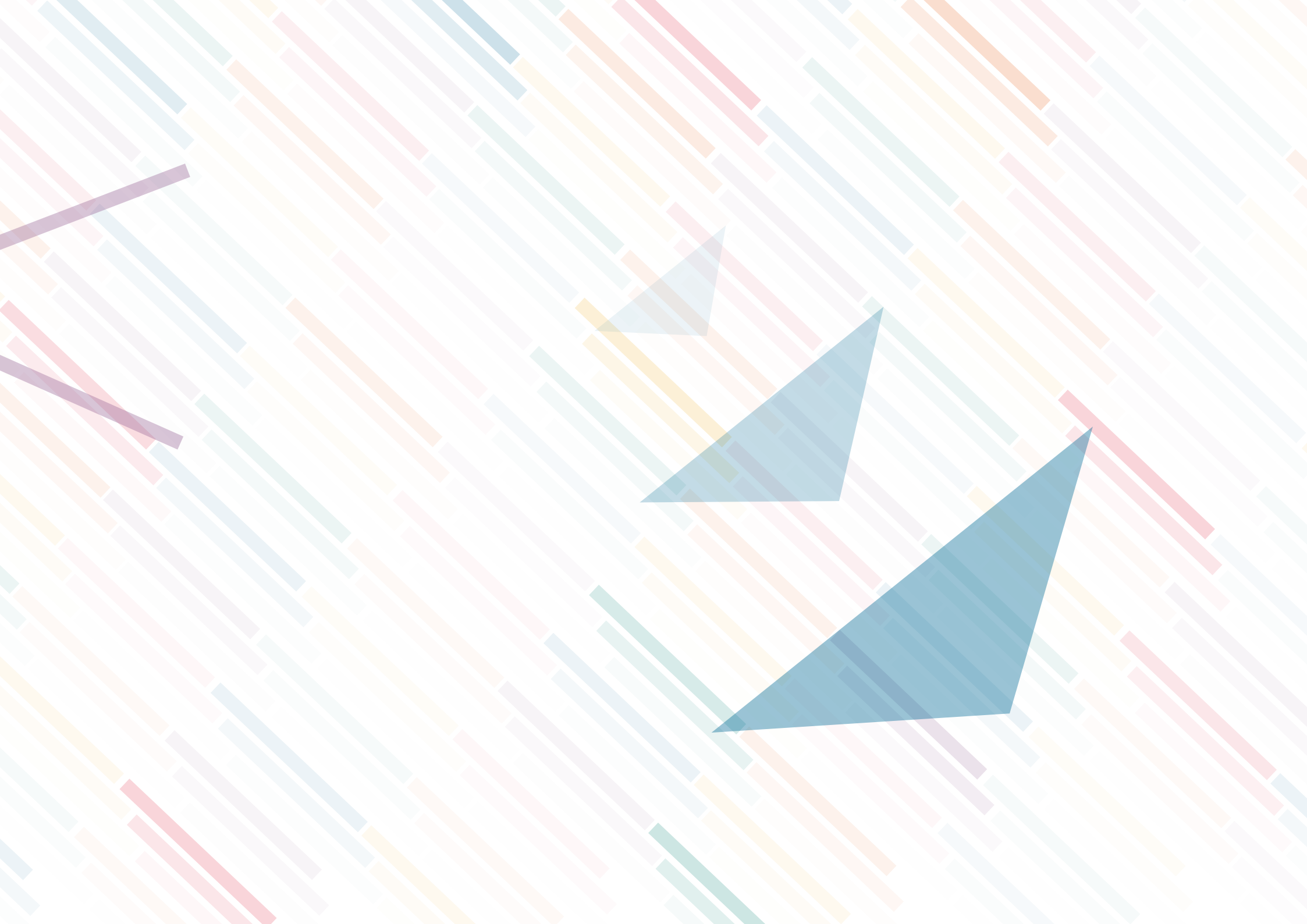
organisations and the Professions will grow and our staff networks will become woven into the cultural fabric, so that we continue to nurture and learn how to enable each other to do our best and understand how to be our best with each other.

What will I be writing in another ten years? Who knows? Or will AI be writing it for me? What I am sure of is that we will have done more than we thought possible and yet there will be unimagined opportunities.

Ben Buchanan
Deputy Director and Diversity Champion.

Inclusion has become woven into our day-to-day association, whether in the same room or on different continents. It has become our business as usual.





Concept House
Cardiff Road
Newport
NP10 8QQ

Tel: 0300 300 2000

Email: information@ipo.gov.uk

Web: www.gov.uk/ipo

Facebook: Intellectual Property Office UK

Twitter: @The_IPO

YouTube: Intellectual Property Office UK

LinkedIn: Intellectual Property Office UK

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