

One year on: a review of progress on the ABPI's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy



April 2022

When we launched our inaugural Equality Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) strategy in April 2021, it was with the objective of setting down a marker for the priorities where we felt ABPI could have most impact. The strategy is rooted in ABPI's mission to make the UK the best place in the world to research, develop and use the medicines and vaccines of the future, and is seen as being critical to our ability to deliver on our mission.

As a trade association representing a very wide range of organisations, in terms of size, HQ location and focus, we wanted to be sure that we would be supporting our member companies and helping them to make a difference, as well as using our voice to effect change. We held our inaugural Equality, Diversity and Inclusion conference in October 2021, bringing together expert speakers and case studies from many organisations to study the compelling need for a greater emphasis on ED&I, the role of leadership, today's leading lights and future direction. We have also piloted a Future Black Leaders network, building further momentum for industry.

Our strategy has three pillars:

- Establishing an ED&I baseline for the pharmaceutical industry
- Delivering a policy programme targeted at addressing health inequalities in the UK
- Refreshing ABPI's ED&I policies.

This update sets out the steps we have taken in each area and our views on current status as well as an overview of the next actions we plan to take.

1. Establishing an ED&I baseline for the pharmaceutical industry

Following the publication of our ED&I Strategy, the ABPI appointed Accenture to undertake a study to understand how ABPI member companies are approaching their own ED&I policies. We wanted this report not only to provide a set of baseline data of company activity, but to inform the ABPI on how best we can support our members.

We worked closely with our HR Forum and a dedicated group of members who are leading this work within their companies to develop a survey and interview questions that formed the basis for the research. 29 companies responded to our survey, with Human Resource Directors (HRDs), General Managers (GMs) and ED&I leads making up 90% of the individuals who responded on behalf of their organisation.





We then invited a sample of 18 General Managers and Human Resource Directors to interviews and held focus groups with 12 Employee Resource Group (ERG)/ED&I Network Leads from across the industry.

The findings have now been published by Accenture in this first baseline report. The report shows that pharmaceutical companies are taking concrete steps to drive improvements in ED&I within their workforce and beyond. There are also four key areas where recommendations have been produced about where improvements could be made. These are in vision and accountability; leadership; visibility and breadth of impact.

The ABPI has now set out how we will support companies to develop their ED&I approach in these four areas.

- **Building partnerships** with expert groups such as the Social Mobility Foundation and the Business Disability Forum, the ABPI will provide resources to support companies in addressing areas identified as currently underrepresented in industry ED&I initiatives. We will be promoting relevant programmes such as mentoring and the Social Mobility Index.
- **Sharing best practice** and upskilling, to support members as they develop their own strategies, taking inspiration from the findings and recommendations of the baseline report. By sharing case studies and providing opportunities for skills exchanges through events, we will help drive forward impact and generate wider understanding of the business value ED&I can bring.
- **Publishing best practice guides**, with the aim of providing a helping hand to companies at different stages along their ED&I journeys, and particularly for smaller companies. Areas to target include data collection, helping to address the challenge of visibility, and sharing experiences of establishing employee resource groups.
- Using the industry report as a foundation, we will continue to **progress our own ED&I education, policies, and approaches within ABPI** as originally set out in our strategy, addressing our own data gathering approach and internal baseline.

2. Delivering a policy programme targeted at addressing health inequalities in the UK

A key mechanism for addressing health inequalities is ensuring the evidence generated to inform healthcare decision-making and health interventions is inclusive.

To help improve diversity and inclusion in clinical trial participation, the ABPI has partnered on the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR)'s INCLUDE project. NIHR INCLUDE, commissioned in 2017 by the NIHR Clinical Research Network, has worked with collaborators across England to co-design guidance to summarise what an under-served group is and guide funders, researchers and delivery teams in design research to be more inclusive of under-served groups.

Building on this and focussing specifically on race equality in health research, the NIHR Race Equality Public Action Group is developing a framework to assess how to better serve diverse communities. An ABPI member company is trialling this framework and ABPI will be supporting the dissemination of this guidance to its wider membership once published in Spring 2022.



ABPI has also responded to the MHRA's recent consultation on clinical trial legislation, stressing the importance of regulatory support for improving diversity and inclusion and patient and public involvement in clinical trials, and offering our supporting in co-developing guidance for researchers and sponsors.

Collectively this contributes to the ABPI's commitment as a delivery partner on the UK Government's UK-wide clinical research vision, which aims to make research more diverse and accessible.

On health inequalities more broadly, the ABPI has partnered with the NHS Confederation to build the right tools, techniques and capabilities to meaningfully address health inequalities. This was launched at the NHS Confederation's NHS Reset Conference in 2021, and we have jointly published reports that examine inequalities of cancer care in Kent and Medway; diabetes in Leicester; and COPD care in the North West of England. These reports focus on the opportunities for collaboration between industry and the NHS that can help address these inequalities.



Furthermore, the ABPI is a member of the Inequalities in Health Alliance (IHA), which has called for a cross-government strategy on the issue. We see the development of Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) as an opportunity for parts of the system to work together to prevent disease and improve the health of the populations they serve and publicly supported this call.

The ICSs will soon be the means for which we deliver research across primary, secondary, and tertiary care settings, which could unlock greater community engagement in research across the NHS and help diversify clinical trial participation. We have welcomed the UK Government's amendment on the Health & Care Bill to embed research across the ICSs and keen to support implementation of this strengthened mandate as the ICSs prepare to go live.

3. Refreshing ABPI's ED&I policies

Our strategy also set out our ambitions for the ABPI's own role, as an employer and as a trade association. In the past year we have worked alongside ABPI member company HR colleagues to learn from each other and ensure we are aligned with industry best practice. The ABPI leadership team embarked on a review of our own internal policies, the results of which have been incorporated into a new staff handbook to be rolled out in 2022. Staff will benefit from enhancements in areas such as new flexible working, enhanced parental leave and more weeks of maternity leave pay vs return to work bonus, and our equal opportunities policy has been upgraded to a broader equality, diversity and inclusion policy. The ABPI will provide further training and guidance for key decision makers such as managers and supervisory staff and those involved in personnel and management practices.

We have started to address our recruitment approach including a focus on ensuring a diverse pool of job applicants is put forward for consideration by any recruitment agency and ensuring that interview panels are themselves diverse.

The ABPI has also demonstrated its commitment to ED&I to its staff through its programme of external speakers invited to staff meetings and by highlighting initiatives such as supporting the Chwarae Teg WomenSpire Awards. We have been engaging with the Social Mobility Foundation's mentoring programme, where members of staff have been given the opportunity to volunteer, commencing in May 2022. The ABPI has made a commitment to introduce a communications internship which will be implemented once staff have fully returned to working at its London office and can provide regular hands-on development and support.



Diversity and inclusion have also been addressed in a continuous programme of initiatives and education on key topics such as mental health and men's and women's health. This includes the launch of a menopause policy along with dedicated intranet sites providing webinars and educational materials to encourage open discussion on these important topics.

The ABPI staff survey in 2021 was a strong indication of the impact of our work in this area with 98% agreeing we support wellbeing, 95% agreeing their manager cares about their wellbeing, 98% agreeing their manager recognises their contribution and value and 98% agreeing their contribution is recognised.

We will continue to evolve our work in this area and to progress our data collection exercise as part of a wider project to review ABPI culture and values as we prepare to move to a new office space from Q4 2022.

Further information

We look forward to working closely with stakeholders and members as we drive change and make progress on our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion journey. If you would like to find out more about our ED&I activities, or to engage with us on any projects in this area, please do get in touch.

For more information about this report, please contact jpearcy@abpi.org.uk

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